



No. XXIII]                      Contents                      [SEPTEMBER 1884

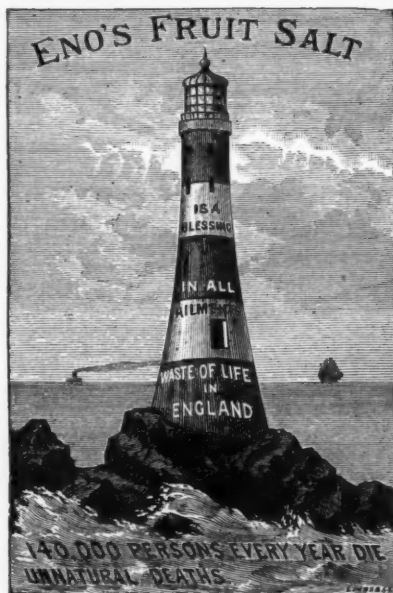
	PAGE
Jack's Courtship: a Sailor's Yarn of Love and Shipwreck. Chapters XXXII.-XXXIV. . . . .	449
By W. CLARK RUSSELL	
The Chase of the Wild Red Deer . . . . .	488
By the Hon. J. W. FORTESCUE.	
Charles John, Earl Canning . . . . .	501
Lines by the COUNTESS OF CORK.	
The Art of Fiction . . . . .	502
By HENRY JAMES.	
A Blue Grass Penelope. ( <i>Concluded</i> ) . . . . .	522
By BRET HARTE	
In September . . . . .	535
By C. D. ROBERTS.	
Madam. Chapters XL.-XLIH. . . . .	536
By MRS. OLIPHANT.	

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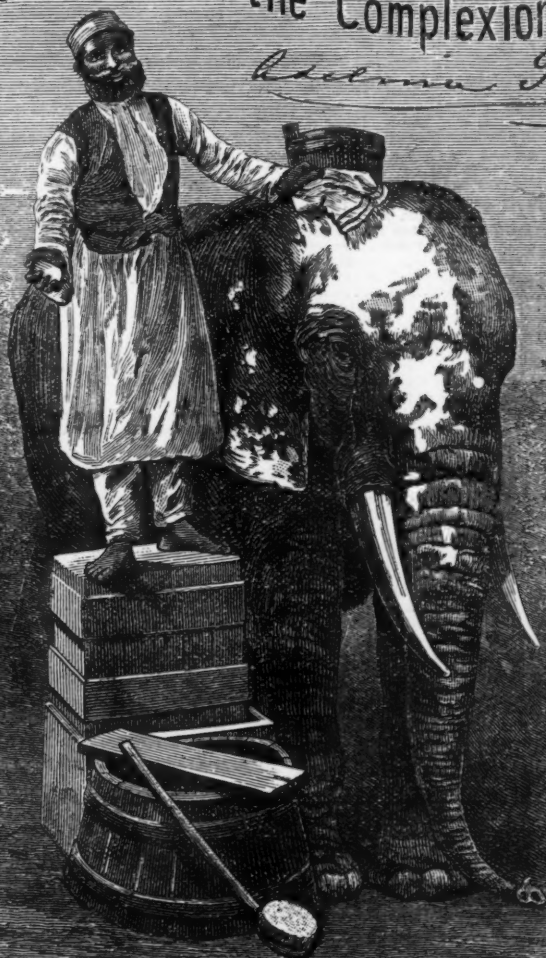
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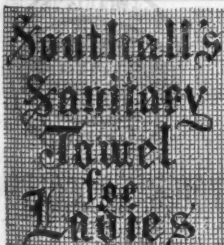
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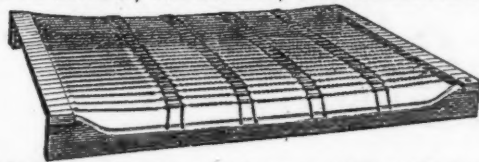
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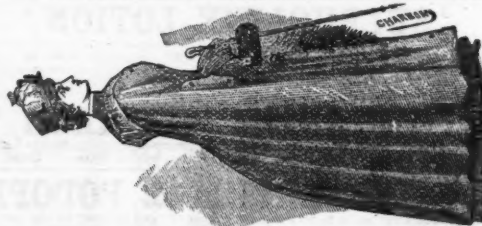
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# LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER 1884.

## CONTENTS.

	PAGE
JACK'S COURTSHIP: A SAILOR'S YARN OF LOVE AND SHIPWRECK. By W. CLARK RUSSELL . . . . .	449
Chapter XXXII.—On the Equator.	
„ XXXIII.—Collision.	
„ XXXIV.—Waiting.	
THE CHASE OF THE WILD RED DEER. By the Hon. J. W. FORTESCUE . .	488
CHARLES JOHN, EARL CANNING. Lines by the COUNTESS OF CORK . .	501
THE ART OF FICTION. By HENRY JAMES . . . . .	502
A BLUE GRASS PENELOPE. By BRET HARTE. ( <i>Concluded</i> ) . . . .	522
IN SEPTEMBER. By C. D. ROBERTS . . . . .	535
MADAM. Chapters XL.—XLIII. By MRS. OLIPHANT . . . . .	536

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# LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

SEPTEMBER 1884.

## *Jack's Courtship :*

*A SAILOR'S YARN OF LOVE AND SHIPWRECK.*

BY W. CLARK RUSSELL.

### CHAPTER XXXII.

#### ON THE EQUATOR.

IF there is one thing that should reconcile a sailor of the old school to steam it is this : it makes calms of no consequence. You cannot fully realise all that that means until you have been hanging about the equator for ten days or so under a frying sun, and on an ocean of molten brass touched here and there with a draught of air that expires in its efforts to reach you. Before I started on this voyage I should have been quite satisfied, for the sake of being with Florence, had I been told that it would consist of nothing but dead calms and headwinds. But a week of the doldrums was too much even for my passion. To look around hour after hour, morning after morning, day after day, and behold always the same eternal placid unruffled heaving, the same deep satin-like blue, dazzling out into a thin tint that was neither green nor azure at the ocean line where the thrilling violet of the sky went down behind it; the same throbbing, burning, cloudless luminary flashing at noon its tremendous fires right straight down over our heads; became soul-sickening before the week had expired. And yet we had ten days of it!

If you glanced over the side you saw your face there as clear as ever a mirror would give it back. If you gazed along the bulwarks you'd notice the rail of them twisting and writhing along the forecandle in the giddy breathless atmosphere like the gliding

motion of an eel. If you touched a deck-seam, whether in or out of the sunshine, the pitch came up in a string at your finger ends. A bluish haze hung over the vessel as though she were smoking as a manure-heap does. The crew stripped themselves half naked and went about their work with fiery faces and mossy breasts glistening with sweat. There was a constant throwing down of braces and hauling round of yards; for the officer of the watch would be incessantly testing the atmosphere with a moistened finger, and if he could detect ever so phantom-like a current of air abroad, whether by the feel of his finger or by the feeble flutter of the vane at the mast-head, he'd fling an order forward from the head of the poop ladder, and the yards would be braced to catch the mockery of a draught. The decks rumbled with curses; the sailors abhorred this boxhauling; what was the good of it, they thought? Shiver the blooming ship! was it right to wring the sweat out of them when the blaze of sunshine on either side the old hooker was just a sheet of burnished silver, and when the heave of the swell never disclosed the faintest wrinkle for leagues and leagues? Better snug the light sails by manning the clewlines and buntlines, haul down the jibs and stay-sails, and leave nothing but the topsails to dust themselves against the masts and wait for the wind to blow.

But for all that, it was this day and night watchfulness that sneaked us along, anyhow. Noon would come, and lo! we had crawled out eight miles, ten miles, some such distance, in twenty-four hours, and the deuce knew how it had been done, for all day long the stuff which the cook's mate had hove overboard in the morning, along with an empty bottle, had hung close, sometimes being under the counter, sometimes under the bow, sometimes alongside.

I found my account, however, in the deepening and the strengthening of my darling's love for me. As a theatre for the improvement and development of passion a sailing ship may be backed against all the ball-rooms, country lanes, balconies, small dull villages, and fashionable watering-places in the world. In olden times mothers sent their daughters to India, more assured of their finding husbands in the tall glazed castles which carried them round the Cape of Good Hope than on dry land. Steam has put an end to this; passages are too short nowadays to make flirting worth while, as girls say. But you'd have understood what the old voyages tended to had you been with us in the *Strathmore*, hanging for ten days under the sun, with the dead ocean looking like a pavement of silver under the cathedral-dome of the heavens whose violet it reflected. Why, such was the effect of it upon us, that before the week was out there was Thompson Tucker making eyes at modest Miss Grant, whilst her mother sat by with alarm depicted in her countenance, but too mild to frown him down; the Marmaduke Mortimers grew several degrees fonder, and the Joyces

carried a more distinctly attached manner in their method of walking about arm-in-arm. Mr. Alphonso Hawke was an old stager, had made the voyage between England and Australia several times, and knew how the monotony of the sea throws people upon one another; and his and Aunt Damaris's scheme for bringing Florence and Mr. Morecombe together never struck me more forcibly as a piece of judgment that might have proved fatal to me had I been left at home and Morecombe taken my place, than it did during those ten days of the doldrums. I remember telling my darling this, and it made her indignant. 'The more I saw of Mr. Morecombe the more I disliked him,' she exclaimed. 'How can you talk such nonsense, Jack?'

'You undervalue the effect of this calm,' said I. 'Behold its influence upon Thompson Tucker. Were Captain Jackson a single man, I should not despair of seeing him and Aunt Damaris exchanging locks of hair. This tedium your father foresaw, and as I by being out of sight would have been out of mind——' But an earnest beautiful glance of her deep and speaking eyes brought up this badinage with a round turn, and in a breath I was pouring out repentance, vows, gratitude, love.

All this while her aunt made no sign. I do not say that she believed that Florence and I were deeply in love; when she was present we always threw a sort of reserve into our behaviour and kept the full expression of our devotion for the stars; but she knew we were constantly together, indeed she never came on to the poop if Florence happened to be on deck without finding me with her; and therefore she was perfectly well aware that a very great deal was going on, though she did not know how much. But she made no objection, she showed no uneasiness, her manner towards me was always as full of amiability as her character would allow her to import into her bearing; whenever she found us together she would join us, but say nothing about it either before my face or to Florence behind my back, behaving indeed as if we were sweethearts and recognised as such by her.

I once had a talk with Daniel about this. He found me alone one morning early, fresh from the head pump where I had got an ordinary seaman to play upon me for ten minutes with a sluicing stream of sparkling water out of the blue under the bows. My friend had come up to look for wind, and found me whistling for it over the taffrail. This set us talking of the weather and of old times, and one thing leading to another, 'Well, Jack,' says he presently, 'what's the *Strathmore* going to do for you in the shape of getting you a wife?'

'You see how it goes with us, Daniel,' I answered. 'I suppose no fonder couple were ever found upon the ocean.'

'The aunt seems quite willing, I fancy,' said he.

'It looks so. She likes me as Mr. Egerton; the question is, will she like me as Jack Seymour?'

'Any way, among us your secret has been wonderfully well kept. I never thought you'd have been able to maintain your alias long. I reckoned your girl would have split—whipped out with it unconsciously—and smothered the whole blessed job. I suppose if the aunt don't find out the truth for herself, you'll have to tell her who you are some of these days. You can't marry under a false name, can you?'

'Of course I can't,' said I. 'My policy has been to make Miss Damaris Hawke like me as Mr. Egerton, and I think I've succeeded.'

'Is there any chance now of her rounding upon you as Jack Seymour and ordering you to leave her niece alone?' said Daniel.

'I can't tell you. If I knew for certain, I'd heave my alias overboard, for Miss Florence hates to call me Mr. Egerton—she says it makes her feel as she were telling a story—whilst the masquerading is as little to my taste as to hers.'

'There's no doubt,' said Daniel, thoughtfully, 'that the aunt don't object to you, as Mr. Egerton, making love to her niece. That's as clear as mud in a wineglass. She lets you and Miss Florence be together, and never interferes that I can see. That's a sort of victory, isn't it? If you have the talent to conquer under false colours, can't you do so under true?'

'Well, you see, Daniel,' said I, 'it's the false colours which have given me the advantage by enabling me to sheer alongside of her without exciting her suspicion as to the real character of the apparently friendly stranger.'

'But what are your particular charms as Mr. Egerton?' asked Daniel. 'How is it that an alias has allowed you to forge leagues ahead of your rate of sailing when your father's name was written bold on your stern and head?'

'You're asking me questions,' said I, 'which are just as much riddles to me as to you. But I'll tell you my notions: first and foremost, Miss Florence was sent away out of England in order to get rid of Jack Seymour. Next, the voyage was likewise planned to bring her and Morecombe together. Keep those points in mind. The plot, so far as Morecombe was concerned, has proved a dead failure. The aunt hates the name of him, and he's as completely out of the running as if he had been sewn up in a hammock and launched through the gangway. But Jack Seymour is still ashore; and the aunt says to herself, "When my niece returns—and return she must some of these fine days—she'll find that fellow waiting for her. My brother won't like that. He has described the youth as a common, insulting sailor-chap, and I for one never could endure such a family connection as he would make." So with this thought in her, d'ye see, Daniel, she plumps up against me, Mr. John Egerton, a very gentlemanly, well-bred youth, extraordinarily polite to her, highly complimentary, the possessor of a decidedly aristocratic name, and clearly an inde-



pendent gentleman. She sees that I have fallen in love with Miss Florence, and that Miss Florence very much likes me. So her old mind goes to work, and she says to herself, "Since Mr. Morecombe is quite out of the question, and since there is very great danger of my niece renewing her affection for that common person, Jack Seymour, when she returns to England, surely I shall be acting with great judgment in encouraging the attentions of this very genteel Mr. Egerton, who, if nothing else comes of it, will at least wholly displace Mr. Jack Seymour from my niece's heart."

'You seem to have hit it,' said Daniel, grinning at me with a kind of admiration; 'hang me if you haven't taken a header into the old maid's mind with a vengeance! But what on earth can she think of Miss Florence's constancy when she discovers in a few days that she has clean forgotten the Jack Seymour who was one of the causes of her being sent away from home, and fallen in love with the perfect stranger, Mr. John Egerton?'

'She has said nothing about it,' I replied; 'and I'm not going to bother myself over her ideas outside those which particularly concern me. If she reasons at all she'll conclude either that her niece is a very impressionable girl, or that Mr. Alphonso Hawke over-emphasised her love for Jack Seymour.'

'If the latter's her notion she won't be afraid of your girl's renewing her love for Jack Seymour when she returns home,' said Daniel very logically.

'But she can't be sure,' said I. 'She won't like to think her brother utterly mistaken. What has probably occurred to her is this: that Miss Florence finds Mr. Egerton more fascinating than Mr. Seymour, though if she don't get Mr. Egerton she'll return to the other.'

'Well, that's very probable,' said Daniel.

'And you must not lose sight,' continued I, discussing the thing with some enjoyment of it, for it enabled me to see points which would not occur to me by thinking to myself, 'of the marked attention I have paid the old lady, the hold I have on her by professing to have got the story from Mr. Morecombe, her natural liking for me not impaired, I daresay, by my cheap little excursion overboard to-day, her belief—acquired God knows how—in my social merits.'

'Ay,' exclaimed Daniel, 'and look how *I've* praised you, Jack! and the Joyces, you know, speak of you as if you were an angel. But I say!' he whipped out with a kind of groan, slewing his purple face round the sea, 'this calm is getting serious. It'll kill my reputation for despatch. Is there no wind left in the world?' and he dodged over to the compass and flitted restlessly about the deck, and then, after speaking awhile to the second mate, he hove a despairing glance aloft and bundled below.

Letting my thoughts linger a bit over this chat, I confess the



wonder that he had expressed and that I had all along felt at the manner in which my secret had been kept from Aunt Damaris struck me afresh almost as if it had been new to me. Never did an old maid's face hold a shrewder pair of eyes than Alphonso's sister's, and I could have sworn that her mind was one of the most suspicious in life; and therefore, seeing how quickly Florence had taken to me, and how I had somewhat of a sailorly cut, spite of my clothes and my sham ignorance of everything concerning the sea, and how I was bound to Australia for no reason whatever that she could find out, I say, it was strange enough that she did not make two and two of all these things, and so guess who I was. But against this you must put, first, that she had never seen me as Jack Seymour; second, that in all probability I had never been described to her outside such general terms as old Hawke's abuse of me conveyed, and which would have nothing to do with my face, figure, or manners; third, that Jack Seymour, being little more than an abstraction to her, she was not nearly so likely to imagine the possibility of his following his sweetheart to sea as would have been the case had she met him in the flesh as Mr. Hawke had; fourth, that the idea of his taking ship with her niece had never in the faintest possible degree occurred to her; fifth, that she would not be aware that Jack Seymour was unknown by sight, if not more familiarly, to Mr. Morecombe, and the circumstance therefore of that young man and Mr. Egerton sharing one berth and conversing as I pretended Mr. Morecombe had conversed with me, would tend almost more than anything else to blind her to the fact that stared her in the face; and finally, that being, as I reckoned, an extremely suspicious person, she possessed all the qualities which sentence their possessor to the constant mortification of being easily tricked.

But to drop all this problemising for the plain truth, the calm, as I have said, kept us to the northwards of the line for ten days, and all the changes which came were a shifting of the colour of the ocean from the rich azure of the morning to the tin-like glitter of noon, following on with a sullen brassy glare as the sun westered till the flaming luminary sank into a sheet of gold and the darkness came, with the Southern Cross hanging low in the south, and the moon rising later and redder every night. But on the afternoon of the tenth day there came a change; you took notice of a staring brightness in the easterly sky against which the white sails showed yellow, a hollower movement of the swell and a rounder sweep in the look of the water, from where the ship hung, down to the horizon that showed clear against the firmament in a sickly paint-like blue from which the eye recoiled. The sun shone mistily, though the fierceness of his bite was all but insufferable when you stepped clear of the awning. The black fins of half a dozen sharks gleamed out of the oily blue, and had the imagination gone to work for the right kind of embellishment for the

glazed, thick, sullen heaving of the swell, it could have hit upon nothing more appropriate.

'They fancy the ship's going to rot through and let us into the water,' said Mr. Thornton to me; 'they're sagacious beasts, and as patient as the foul fiend himself until what they wait for is within reach of their grinders. But they'll be cheated; there's a squall brewing yonder, and there'll be a breeze of wind behind it if I'm not greatly mistaken.'

You needed a sailor's eye for atmospheric effect to understand his meaning when he pointed into the north-west quarter, and I don't fancy that I should have noticed the sign myself but for his indication of it. *Then*, indeed, it was plain enough in the sort of blue film that seemed, so to speak, to be bending the sky down to the sea as if with the weight of it, though the horizon ran in a sharp firm line right through it, and after a minute's gazing one felt it to be the shadow of something drawing up from behind the ocean and that was pressing upon the water in a manner to give the swell a rounder back and a quicker run. By-and-by a streak of haze floated up and looked white enough as it stayed there, but when I turned to take another squint it had changed into a thin brown, and had spread and risen, the fringe of it resembling a smear upon the sky and the sea under it taking a sort of olive tint which brightened out into blue south and north-east.

Aunt Damaris came on deck armed with a large fan; presently Florence arrived. I placed chairs for them, and said with the artlessness of a landsman, 'Mr. Thornton thinks we're going to have a squall.'

'Thank goodness!' exclaimed Aunt Damaris. 'And pray where is it to come from?'

'Yonder, he says,' and I pointed to the gathering thickness.

'What is a squall?' asked Mrs. Marmaduke Mortimer, who was sitting near, her husband for a wonder not being with her.

'A sudden burst of wind,' replied Aunt Damaris in her sharp manner.

'Nothing dangerous, I hope?' said Mrs. Mortimer, looking right up overhead into the sky.

'The burst won't come from there,' said Aunt Damaris, 'but from the end of the sea yonder;' and she extended her lean hand that sparkled with rings.

'Oh, I see!' cried the newly-married wife effusively. 'Oh, Mr. Egerton, do look at those yellow patches upon the fog there! Are they not like sunflowers?'

The sunshine was blazing slantingly upon the rising bodies of vapour, and brightening the brows of them with a sulphur-coloured radiance. The effect was striking, almost wild, for the dark green weltering of the sea under the thickness gave a malignant hint of storm to the look of the heavens there, and the dry yellow gleaming in the van of the coming outburst was just the colour a painter would

have chosen for heightening the sullen meaning of the fast rising darkness. In a few minutes this appearance vanished, and the vapour thickened up like the pourings of a factory chimney kept low by the rarefaction of the atmosphere. The swell had increased in volume with amazing rapidity, and the deep ship rolled and wallowed in it as if she had a mind to spring every spar in her. The beating of the canvas was like the continuous discharge of small cannons. You saw the people on the main deck stumbling and lurching, and clinging convulsively as they tried to pass along, and every now and again a flash of smoke-like spray swept on board through a scupper hole as the ship buried her side. During one heavy roll I barely missed stopping Aunt Damaris from tumbling heels over head with her chair; she was all but gone when I flung my shoulder against her and shored her up. This, coupled with the fast spreading gloom and the wild tumblification and the fierce creaking of flapping noises, frightened her.

'Captain!' she screamed out to Daniel, 'what is the meaning of this? Is it to be a squall or tempest? Don't deceive me. I know the difference, sir.'

'Nothing to cause you any alarm, Miss Hawke,' answered the skipper, who stood looking at the weather past the starboard quarter-boat, and he then gave some orders to the chief mate. One might tell he guessed that the worst of whatever was coming lay in the look of it, for all that Mr. Thornton sung out was to clew up the royals, haul down the flying jib, haul up the mainsail and stand by the topgallant halliards. 'When the rain before the wind, then your topsail halliards mind,' chants the forecastle poet; and here was the wind coming first. The swelling vapour rolled up until it looked all the way to starboard like the loom of cliffs thousands of feet high, while the scud, like dust off the floor under the flourishing of a broom, blew out in pale yellow volumes from under the compacter masses, and was floating overhead and dimming the sky into the east, with the sun amongst it a shapeless sickly blotch of light, before ever a breath of air could be seen soiling the polished surface of the mountainous swell. Maybe the wind was waiting for the signal; it came in the shape of a copper-like glare of lightning that more resembled the cloud's reflection of a solid sheet of fire than the whizz of an electric spark; and to the tune of the rumbling of thunder rushed the wind, blowing the gloom right and left, and creating appearances like what they call ox-eyes in it, spaces of light that grew from points into yawning gaps, as though the squall was driving down upon us through tunnels in the sky.

'Look!' cried I to Florence, 'how you may see the wind before there is draught enough to extinguish a candle.'

I took her to the rail to watch, whilst Aunt Damaris clawed her way to the companion, on the top steps of which she stood with her sharp nose forking out beyond the hood, and pecking as it

might be at the coming squall. It was a fine sight to see the wind rushing along the tops of the swell, flashing white in the hollows, and sweeping with a yell over the brows in a scattering of spray. It looked to advance in the form of an arch, with the legs spreading out from south-west to north-east, and the lifting of the white water under the shearing of it made Daniel reckon there was more in it than he had supposed.

'Let go the topgallant halliards!' he sung out. 'Hands by the fore and mizzen topsail halliards!' And as the yards aloft came running down, with a second brilliant gleam of lightning the squall burst upon the ship and down she leaned to it, motionless for a space, with the smooth water under her lee bubbling and churning half-way up the bulwarks. I had my darling by this time snug under the starboard quarter-boat, for there was no rain in sight as yet, and I wanted her to see the squall; and the boat under which we stood split the wind and sent it screaming clear of us over our heads. Aunt Damaris had vanished, but the other passengers, ladies and gentlemen, held their ground and looked on with interest at a scene full of excitement and commotion, and welcome, God knows, as the first honest break in the ten days of rankling, stewing calm. The helm had been put hard over, and the ship was slowly paying off as she began to stir after the first heavy lean-down: but Lord! the shindy aloft; sails thundering, masts jumping, the gloom as if it were cloud flying through the rigging mingled with a glancing of spume; the crew sprawling about, Mr. Thornton bawling, Daniel excitedly gesticulating near the wheel. Why, I daresay some of the poor 'tween-deck folks thought it was all up with us, when, in reality, it was a mere equatorial squall with the worst of it in its teeth, which were soon to leeward of us, and a sprinkling of rain and a fresh breeze to follow.

There is no finer sight, I think, than a full-rigged ship offers when she is in the act of paying off, heeling over, with a fierce outfly of wind screeching past her. Her lee-rigging hangs slack over the white water; her sails swell out in cloud-like shapes through the buntlines and upon the lowered yards: you note the gradual recovery of the heavy slant of her masts, as with a slow sweep of her jibbooms she settles the wind further and further aft yet, until, yielding to the full impulse of the blast, with a long hissing plunge she takes the first of the seas, and like a fleeing madwoman whose tresses stream from her head and whose raiment has the wildness of a witch's as she runs, the ship rushes forward as though she were the very spirit of the storm whose darkness is upon her and whose ravings pierce the ear from her rigging. Several bright flashes of lightning illuminated the heaving snow-like path of the vessel as she headed with the squall and sped for a space on the wings of it. All was flying darkness for awhile, with a roll of thunder playing through as though it would give a

tornado-note to the outburst; but in about ten minutes the weight of the wind sensibly diminished, and while the helm was put down to bring the *Strathmore* to her course, I had just time to hand Florence to the companion, when wash came the rain in a bright sheet, crushing out the wind as if by magic, and leaving the ship-slapping her wet canvas upon the heavy swell, whilst through the grey deluge to leeward you could catch sight of the white water under the clouds passing away in a whirl of gloom. The rain ceased as suddenly as the wind had expired; the windward darkness lightened, and a marble-like streak of blue opened betwixt the main and mizzen topsail yardarm; a wet gleam of sunshine danced along the weltering ocean boundary, and broadening fast flashed up the whole expanse of the deep in the south-west, exposing the glorious blue of it crisping under the breeze that was sure to follow the squall, and making the passing thickness look like a solid shadow upon the sea, shot with a malignant lustre like the bluish tints on battle-smoke, and spanned by a brilliantly rich rainbow through whose exquisitely coloured arch you seemed to gaze on the very darkness of night itself. In a few minutes the welcome breeze was blowing merrily through our rigging, the songs of the sailors rose as they mastheaded the yards, ordinary seamen sprawled about heavily slapping the decks with swabs, and with her wet planks sparkling in the sunshine and her canvas drying from grey into white, the *Strathmore*, rolling heavily and gracefully over the long swell, a line of yeasty foam slipping past her glossy sides, looked to have settled herself fairly down at last for the passage of the equator, upon whose northern skirts she had been hanging like a dead thing for ten days.

We crossed the line in nineteen degrees west longitude, carrying a pleasant sailing breeze with us a trifle abaft our starboard beam, and the ship was just a pile of canvas with five stunsails out, the lower stunsail yawning wide over the swinging-boom guyed forward, and every cloth pulling steadily whilst the white trucks swung like silver buttons under the floating clouds which gleamed like the inside of oyster-shells as they sprang sweet and fresh from the deep blue sea and sailed up the azure on the road the sun was taking. In my time, when the equator was crossed on the outward passage to Australia, there would be a stir among the passengers as if they began to consider, at last, that there was a chance some of these fine days of the voyage coming to an end. The running large before the north-east trades is hopeful, but sometimes you will get a dreary sickener betwixt the Channel and the parallel where the steady breeze is picked up; and then perhaps follows the deadly pause upon the glassy equatorial sea, where the water dies out in haze and the sun finds a blazing mirror whereto he combs his flaming beard as he drives on his tour round the world. But the North Atlantic past, hope grows brisk as the south-east trades are approached. The Cape is not



very far off now, you think: and then hurrah for an easterly course across the mighty Southern Ocean.

I can answer for the influence of latitude south upon the spirits of the *Strathmore's* passengers. We grew more cordial. If there was any ill-feeling it was betwixt Aunt Damaris and Captain Jackson and his wife. Not that the others liked the old lady very much, but they would come up and talk to her, and she would converse with them more or less politely according to the temper she happened to be in. But she and the Jacksons had nothing to say to one another. This no doubt indirectly helped my case, for the aversion among them made the old lady guess that the navy man and his helpmate would not show her much mercy were they to hear all about the cause of Morecombe's joining the ship; and many a time would I think, as I peered at Aunt Damaris, 'If you only knew who I was, if you could only conceive the additions the story would gain by the simple disclosure of the truth from *me* to the Jacksons, there'd be no bulkhead in this ship thick enough for you to hide behind.'

Friendlier feelings arising with our progress, various amusements were planned. The steerage passenger singers were invited on the poop, and obliged us with a very pretty little concert. Then the 'tween-deck passengers gave a ball upon the main-deck that lasted through the dog watches; a fiddle was brought out of the fore-castle, the fellow who played it seated himself on the drum of the quarter-deck capstan, some rum was brought up at the expense of us aft and distributed, diluted, in wineglassfuls amongst the poor people, and we sat at the break of the poop looking down on as lively a scene as ever kept folks happy and laughing at sea. I see the picture now; Jack Fiddler sawing away with an occasional squirt of tobacco juice over his right shoulder, men and women dancing to his strains, the children frolicking amongst them, the crew looking on from the district of the galley with bronzed grinning faces, till the night fell upon us all with a hurried sweeping embrace of the sea within her shadowy arms and the stars looked down at us through the rope-ladders.

Then the crew would furnish us with some diversion by turning up to dance a little bit of a Dane, a rat of a man, with eyes like a ferret, and a face with an expression upon it such as you'll see sometimes in the gunpowder prickings of sailors upon seamen's arms and breasts. This little fellow was the best hornpipe dancer I ever saw in my life. I never before, and have never since, met his equal. He would dress himself up to resemble a man-of-war'sman, grass hat on nine hairs, his tawny breast bare to his belt, flowing white pants and low shoes with heels which rattled the planks like castanets. The fiddler would crawl upon the booms, and the Dane take his stand upon the weather side of the fore-castle at the head of the ladder, so that we could see him plain under the weather clew of the mainsail that was hauled up; and when

all was ready and the fiddle began to squeak, off would go the Dane, footing it as no landsman in this world ever did ; no, though he had passed his whole life in doing nothing else ; his pace was noble, the twinkling of his feet miraculous, and to see him there with his head floating like a bubble on his shoulders, his arms crossed on his bosom or bent over his head, and a rapping coming from under him like a roll upon a drum, with a graceful leap here and there, and a sedate march round, and a face all the while as solemn as a mute, was to behold the hornpipe danced as only a sailor knows how.

This delighted Florence more than anything else. Her pulse seemed to keep time to the ocean dance, and I would catch her watching with a glistening eye as you'll mark it in people who find more in a thing than it looks to have. You see we had the right kind of setting for that picture ; no footlights, nor groups of stage mountebanks, nor painted rigging leading heavens know where ; but the deep blue white-flecked sea, melting into an evening richness of tint—for these were dog-watch sports, of course—and the fountain-like sound of bubbles and foam coming up over the sides, and the white decks, with the red sunshine lying in pools of light among the shadows, and the groups of rough seamen, simple-hearted as children, smoking and watching on the fore-castle, and somehow causing you to raise your eyes from their dark faces to those lofty spars up and down which they were always travelling, where the sails shone like swelling spaces of yellow satin in the hot gleam of the sinking luminary whose radiance touched the greased masts until they looked to be made of amber.

Once we went so far as to shake a foot among ourselves on the poop. The steerage passengers made the music for us, and we got through several quadrilles and a waltz or two capitally. For one of the square dances I had Aunt Damaris as a partner, with Daniel and Mrs. O'Brien to face us. I doubt if the old lady would have consented to dance with anybody else ; and on the whole I afterwards considered that I had run a great risk in asking her, as she was more likely than not to fly in my face with the suspicion that I desired to make her ridiculous. But so far from resenting my politeness, she appeared struck and gratified with it. 'It's some years now since I have danced,' said she, with a sort of simper that would have been exquisitely diverting in some Dresden china comedy of the old school ; and you could see that she was remembering the time when she danced often, and when there were partners and to spare for her. She did not hang in the wind long ; I gave her my arm, and then Daniel and Mrs. O'Brien, and Thompson Tucker and Miss Grant, and Mr. Joyce and Florence posted themselves, the concertina twanged, and we started. You'll reckon that the decks were pretty steady, and that was so. There was the long ocean swell always hollowing and rounding under our forefoot ; but a steady breeze was in the sails, every sheet was eased



well off, and the ship went along upright ; her curtsies only made our heels the nimbler. Aunt Damaris and Mrs. O'Brien matched each other well for airs and graces. The Irish lady was as stout as my partner was lean ; and they behaved as if they were on the floor of an amphitheatre with galleries running up to the sky full of spectators. Their self-consciousness was something to live in the memory, like the meteor we had seen, or the sea-serpent. With slightly lifted dress to give room for their pointed toes, they went to work as if George III. was on the throne, curtseying and smirking, though my partner was the more old-fashioned ; she seemed to bring up a smell of lavender on the poop, and, to have done her justice, I needed smalls and a frill. Mrs. O'Brien gave us a taste of Castle airs, for she had danced at that court I heard her tell Daniel (who looked as though he did not understand her, by the way), and all that she required to complete her amazing carriage was a bundle of feathers on the top of her head and a bronze-coloured dress to glisten as her fat form rose and fell inside it. To turn from her to Florence ! to glance from that broad homely Irish countenance, with its long stretch betwixt the nose and the upper lip, and the small, self-satisfied, bright black eyes, to the pet of my heart, lovely always, whether in sunshine or starlight, flinging a kind of poetry round her upon the rudest and homeliest details of the ship's furniture by the magic power of beautifying with the surpassing grace of her form, the gleam of her deep sweet eyes, the glint of her hair, the snowlike flash and sparkle of her motioning, ungloved hands, whatever was near her, aye, though it were even Daniel's nor'west face or the lean acidulated features of her aunt—why, I say, it was worth keeping your eye fixed for a spell on Mrs. O'Brien for the delight you found in turning it afterwards upon Florence Hawke. You may reckon I danced with *her* ; one waltz we had—sailors are noble partners, ladies, in round dances :—and as we floated round the skylights up to the man at the wheel and back again to the break of the poop, revolving as if we were a couple of angels bent upon finding Paradise in the strains of a concertina and upon the white planks of a ship's deck, you may take it that my hold of her waist was something more than a dancer's grip ; and so well were we matched in our footing, every movement pairing as the albatross resting on the wing swings in unison to the speeding of the surges, that we talked into one another's ears as we danced as comfortably and as eloquently as if we were seated and no one was by.

But these merry-makings did not cover many evenings.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## COLLISION.

ON Christmas Day it was calculated at noon, by dead reckoning, that our latitude was about thirty-six degrees twenty-three miles south, and our longitude about seventy-six degrees twenty miles east. Dead reckoning is finding out a ship's position by counting up the number of miles she has run in a given time as shown by the log, and by marking off her courses on a chart; and this had to be done on that Christmas Day, for it came with a thick, leaden sky and a raw southerly wind. It was the unpleasantest touch of weather we had encountered for weeks. A sluggish swell rolled up against our lee-bow like the heavings of an ocean of green paint, and this combined with the run of the surges with the wind rendered the movement of the ship exceedingly confused and uncomfortable. There was no rain, though all round the sea there stood a haze that might well have passed for the grey colouring of a heavy downpour there. The *Strathmore* leaned before the fresh wind under whole topsails and fore and maintop-gallant sails, and the yards being braced in a little she was sailing fast, though the bow swell bothered her and caused her at times to fling out a furious play of foam on either hand. There might have been ice to windward, with such an edge in it did the wind come; and we all appeared in warm clothes as though we were making the passage of the Horn.

Despite the gloomy sky and the bleak and sullen appearance of the sea, we went to work to look cheerful, toiling, like true Britons as we were, to seem happy because it was Christmas Day. But what pleased us more than the arrival of the twenty-fifth of December was the perception that a little more than three weeks of such progress as we were making would be giving us a sight of Sydney Town. The hope made me as glad as any of the rest. I wanted the voyage to end. I had achieved all that was possible: had won my pet's love, had made Aunt Damaris like me, and there was nothing more to be done on the sea. I wished to be ashore, to be playing my part there as Jack Seymour, ultimately maybe to escort Florence back to England and force her father's hand, partly by his sister's backing me and partly by my long identification with his daughter. Anyway, happen what might, I had had enough of the ocean for the time being, and I remember the pleasure I felt when I reflected that I had quitted the life for good, and that, unlike my friend Daniel, I need never approach salt-water again when this voyage was over.

What sort of merrymaking the 'tweendeck folks had I can't say; in the way of cheer I reckon the festival to them did not go

very much beyond a few plums to spot their brown duff with. And the forecask, as I might be sure of, would fare no better. Are there land-goers still flourishing who fancy that on Christmas Day, Mercantile Jack at sea enjoys life? Wonderful it is where people get their notions of the nautical calling from. I have known a writer to send a sailor on to the jibboom to furl it: but even that touch doesn't come near to the extravagant fancies people have of Jack's life when he's afloat; how his calling is made up of dancing, singing, smoking and drinking; how on Saturday nights he pledges his sweethearts and wives (of whom he has a score) in large cans of rum-punch, fragrant with lemon and screeching hot; how on Christmas Day he decorates his hammock with holly, says grace over a sirloin of beef, and sends to the captain for a *petit verre* of cognac just to stave off indigestion after three platefuls of rich black plum-pudding. Well, there may be ships afloat where the sailor is so served; but if they have owners you may bet they are the people who hold shares in the *Flying Dutchman*. Christmas rations! I'll tell you my experience: a tin of yellow water such as you'd get by dropping a bucket into the Thames abreast of the Isle of Dogs, boiled till it steams and served out under the title of pea-soup because of a few pale shot dropped into it, harder than lead to the jaws; next a lump of greasy, rancid pork, smelling like—but I durst not seek a comparison for that; and last, a mass of coarse flour worked into dough by the help of the same sort of slush that they grease down with and feed the forecask lamp with, sprinkled with two penn'orth of raisins for a mess of ten or twelve hungry souls, boiled in a canvas bag, then pitched into a wooden tub and called pudden. Or for pea-soup and pork substitute a hunk of beef so massive that you could not drive a corkscrew into it, so tasteless in all save brine that nothing but the cask it comes from could find it a name; a piece of meat you could carve into a pipe or a snuff-box, and use; or work up into a doll's house, or an ornament for a mantelpiece. Then for dessert there are biscuits so full of worms that broken bits of the ship's bread might pass for diseased filberts. Truly we greatest maritime people on the face of the earth treat our sailors nobly. Oh, for the privilege of turning the tables for six months only; of letting the sailor send the shipowner to sea in the forecask for that time!

In the cuddy on that Christmas Day our dinner-table was embellished with two plum-puddings of large proportions and dark colour. Daniel sat behind one of them, and from the fore-end of the table his face would look like the moon rising over a tumulus. It was black enough outside to make the cuddy a brilliant and delightful shelter. You saw the darkness lying as if it were a tarpaulin upon the skylights, and the muffled moan of the wind and the stifled wash of the sea ran in a grim sound

through the chattering of our voices and the chink of plates and glasses.

'I shall be glad to feel Australian ground under my foot,' said Captain Jackson; 'the voyage to the antipodes is a long business.'

'Well, sir,' says Daniel, 'in another month or so I hope you'll have been long enough ashore to make you forget all about this voyage.'

'Oh, it's been a good voyage—very comfortable, I'm sure,' said Captain Jackson. 'Ship a trifle deep perhaps at the start, but she's risen as she's gone.'

'It's queer to think of to-day being Christmas,' observed Mr. Thompson Tucker. 'Where shall we all be this time a year?'

'I suppose in hot countries there's no such thing as Christmas Day?' said Mrs. O'Brien.

'Depends on the religion of the inhabitants, ma'am,' replied Captain Jackson.

'Well, to be sure, I should have thought of that,' exclaimed Mrs. O'Brien. 'Captain, how uncomfortably the ship rowls.'

'Head swell and a beam sea—a nasty conjunction,' responded Daniel. 'But we're heading true for Balmain, and by listening you should be able presently to hear the locusts humming.'

So the chattering went on, all of us taking a turn at it; even Florence, who was usually very quiet at table, talked briskly. There was a deal of wine-taking, for the custom was in force then; and I had the honour of drinking with Aunt Damaris, who, sitting on the skipper's right, had some difficulty in seeing me; but when she did catch my eye her bow was a handsome one. It was a quarter to eight; dinner was over, but we were lingering at table, cracking nuts and nibbling at the biscuits and listening to stories told first by one and then another, Captain Jackson's yarn reminding Mr. Joyce of an anecdote, and Mr. Joyce's anecdote recalling an incident to somebody else. The cheerful lamplight swung over the table and sparkled bright in glass and silver; you saw the stern-cabin doors in shadow past the mizzenmast, the companion-steps mounting to the deck, the polished bulkheads going down with the lamplight upon them to the cuddy front, where the windows looking on to the maindeck stood in ebony squares. I held my darling's hand under the table, and my eyes were on her face as she listened to the story then being told.

At that instant there was a shock as though an earthquake had happened right under the ship. You heard a crash and ripping noise forward; shouts and screams; the rending sound of falling spars; a rush of feet. The ship stopped dead, heeling over, over to leeward till I thought she was capsizing; some of the passengers lost their balance and fell; the women shrieked wildly; a hundred articles rolled off the tables, and the clattering and smashing of plates and wineglasses fearfully increased the confusion. Whether we had driven into St. Paul's or Amsterdam

Island, or were in collision with a ship, was not to be guessed in that cuddy. One or the other it was. I believed that the *Strathmore* was going bodily down. She must have heeled over to an angle of fifty degrees, and with Florence half fainting lying against me (for she was seated on my right, and the frightful reel of the vessel threw her weight upon my arm), I held on to the table with my teeth locked, half-stupefied as the best of us will sometimes be when a frightful disaster happens in a breath, when a calamity falls like a thunderbolt and spreads a hundred wild horrors ere a man can cry 'Oh!'

I looked for Daniel, but he had vanished. Down on the deck to leeward against the bulkhead which framed the cabin doors, I saw Captain Jackson supporting his wife who appeared in a fit; Mr. Joyce, with his hands bleeding, groped in a blind way for the door of the cabin in which his children were sleeping, staggering as he felt along the polished panels in the very posture of a stumbling, staggering skater upon ice; Mrs. Grant sat crouched on the deck amidst a whole raffle of odds and ends which had fallen from the table, shrieking for her daughter, who was seated on the right-hand side of the fore and aft table, and who, with the others there, was rendered absolutely helpless and incapable of stirring by the terrific angle of the deck. There is nothing in language to give you the feeblest idea of the frightful confusion at that moment; the pounding of canvas outside, the heavy scampering of feet, the wild shouts of men, the screams of women, the heavy washing sound of water, the hill-like angle of the deck, the drowning heave of the stricken hull upon the heavy swell and the sharper play of the surges. I could not command my legs, and durst not therefore let go of the table; but in a few moments the ship righted considerably, and gripping Florence round the waist, and feeling in the grasp I took of her that at that minute I had the strength of ten men in me, I was bearing her to the companion steps, when Aunt Damaris shrieked out to me to save her, and, fairly leaping from where she stood, caught my left arm in a death-clasp.

The sensation inspired by the motion of the hull was that she was settling down; and any man would have imagined this to be happening who had felt her sluggish recovery, that was like the gradual erectness a vessel takes when she founders. Believing this, therefore, I had but one thought; to get Florence on deck, stand by her and take my chance of life and death with her and at her side. But her aunt's grasp was not to be shaken off; the tenacity of it was like the clip of a steel hook; so, as it might be placing my half-fainting love before me with my right arm circling her waist, I pushed my way up the companion-ladder, dragging Aunt Damaris in my wake, who followed as if she had been a sack.

If I am unable to give you the least idea of the confusion below, what am I to do with the black, howling, thunderous scene



into which I emerged with those two women? The ship, as I might know by the wind blowing over the taffrail, had swung with her head to the nor'rard; it was as dark as a wolf's throat; here and there in the sooty shadow you'd see the ghastly glare of foam, flickering up an instant and disappearing; but oh! it was not the blackness that made the horror; *that* was in the hellish uproar along the poop and upon the maindeck; the yelling of men, the shrieking of women, the shouts of captain and mates, the bawling of seamen; there was wreckage aloft, as you might have known by the pounding up there; apparently sheets and halliards had been let go fore and aft, and the flying gear flogged the masts and canvas as if a thousand fiends were overhead smiting the spars and sails with thongs in their triumph over the ear-piercing anguish below.

With Florence on one arm and Aunt Damaris's hands locked upon the other, I stood looking from side to side seawards, to discover, if possible, the cause of this disaster, for whether we had struck an iceberg, or a rock, or a ship, or one of those lumping derelicts which encumber the ocean to the frequent destruction of vessels, I could not imagine; but I could see nothing—not a light, not an outline, not a deeper shadow anywhere to tell me of some object besides ourselves being upon that weltering black surface. I had dragged Florence and her aunt to the rail just abaft the foremost of the two quarter-boats—the *Strathmore* slung two on either hand, and a gig over the stern, and had besides a big long-boat stowed forward abaft the galley—and as I stood struggling to pierce the scene before acting, dozens of figures came rushing past us, and there was a mad tumble of two score of them, at least, into the boats; but there was no sailor among them; they were evidently steerage and 'tweendeck passengers, they knew nothing of handling the falls or casting the gripes adrift, and I supposed they dared not use their knives for fear of losing the boats. It was a selfish brutal struggle, as far as I could make out, and all the actors were men; and knowing very well that all the good they could do would be to drown themselves and lose the boats for us, I struggled to free myself from Aunt Damaris.

'Oh, Jack, do not leave me!' shrieked Florence.

'My darling!' I cried, 'let me save those boats if I can. Let me find out what has happened. We may not be in immediate danger. Stop where you are—and trust to me—both of you trust to me! Let go of my arm, Miss Hawke! for Christ's sake, let go! I have been a sailor—I may be of service—' and with a wrench I broke away, and sprang into the thick of the nearest of the groups struggling at the boats.

'Men!' I shouted in a voice to which my excitement lent a volume that I often recall as an incredible sound for my lungs to have produced, 'the captain says there is no danger! the well has been sounded—the ship is tight. Out of those quarter-boats for your lives. If the gripes give way they'll capsize and drown every

mother's son of you. Stick to the ship! I tell you she's as sound as she was when she left London!' and without ado I fell to dragging the fellows off the hen-coops, manhandling them as if I were in the thick of a death-struggle, calling upon those who had sense in them, who were Englishmen and had the spirit of men, to help me to save the madmen from drowning themselves; and so fiercely did I pull and haul upon the cowards, flinging them back, all the while roaring out that the ship was as tight as a bottle, that some of them believed me and lent me a hand, and presently groups of them were standing at the hencoops, listening to me swearing that there was no danger, that there were boats and to spare for us all if there *were* danger, that the captain would not suffer a life to be lost if they would be cool, and so on: all urged in the most passionate, shouting, convincing tone; though some still stuck to the boats, cowering down in them as they swung at the davits. There was a hand at the wheel—you just caught the glimmer of his outline in the haze of the binnacle-lamp; and well I recall shrieking to those dastards to LOOK AT HIM! did they think if the ship was sinking that sailor there would be coolly steering her? And this simple thing they seemed to find more reassuring than all my other outcries put together.

By this time I might tell that the others on the maindeck were being pacified or persuaded into some approach to orderliness, though again and again a woman's scream would go shrill up into the blackness, where there seemed to be a storm with the slatting of canvas and the whipping of mutilated gear. There was the shining of lanterns on the maindeck, and I sprang off the poop; finding right under the break of it an under-steward holding a lamp there, I collared him and ran him up the ladder, bawling, 'Bring that light aft! There's a gang of cowards there ready to get the boats over. The light'll give them heart!' and I hurried him to the after-skylight. 'There!' I cried; 'stand you here with that light. Here, my lads,' I shouted, addressing the swarm that hovered near the boats, 'come and assemble round this light. I tell you the ship's tight—tight as ever she was!' And a number of them came at once and grouped themselves about the lantern, taken by the light as the human eye always is in darkness and in a moment of terror, and perhaps finding a trifle of courage now that the shrieking and yelling had subsided and the ship went on living.

I went away again to the fore end of the poop and found a man at the head of the poop-ladder. I peered close and said, 'Is that you, Daniel?'

'Yes,' he answered.

'What report for the cowards aft! I can help you by keeping them in check.'

'We have been run into by a big steamer,' he replied, talking fiercely, like a man in a fever; 'she has holed us under the star-board bow, and the fore compartment is full of water. If the

bulkhead gives we shall go down like a stone.—Mr. Thornton!’ he roared to the mate; and I ran to where I had left my love to tell her what I had heard.

Talk of nightmares! queer sights I admit are beheld in ugly dreams, but I should like to know what wildest phantasy of slumber ever came up to the vision of that crowd of men hovering around the lantern on the skylight—one brandishing his arms in the insanity that had come to him with his fear, and raving dismal trash about his being one of the elect of God, and the only man in that ship sure of going to heaven; three or four of them on their knees praying; two—brothers may be—locked in an embrace; whilst from time to time one or another would start and run for the maindeck, perhaps to find the women of his family; and these fellows had forgotten *them*, you’d notice; they were all men who had rushed to those boats; whilst others stood with their arms folded, like persons who reckoned their time had come and were going to their death lost in thought. Well, an actor in such a scene as this is not a fit person to paint it; he’ll see but little; the impression is a mixture of wild horror and hideous clamour, the rushing of the wind through rigging, the unearthly sobbing and washing of water, the deep gloom that puts the ship out of sight past the mainmast, and the breathless, thrilling, maddening expectation of the next moment finding him with the salt-water burning his throat, and the swoon of drowning cold in his brains.

‘What is our situation?’ cried Aunt Damaris. ‘Are we sinking, Mr. Egerton?’

‘No,’ I answered, clasping Florence to me; ‘a steamer has struck us, made a hole in the bow and filled the fore compartment with water. But the bulkhead that prevents the water flowing into the after portions of the ship is bound to be substantial, and you may be sure there is no immediate danger. Besides, we have thorough seamen in Captain Thompson and his officers. I know by the orders I have caught what they have been doing. You may trust the captain; if he believed the danger immediate he’d give orders for the boats to be cleared—’ and I broke off, feeling Florence shivering, to cry, ‘My God! you are both without covering for your heads! Pray be advised—go to your cabin and warmly clothe yourselves—I will accompany you!’

But Aunt Damaris cried that she would not leave the deck—if she was to be drowned it would be in the open air, not in her cabin; and seeing Florence move as if she meant to go below with me, she seized hold of her and shrieked to her not to leave her alone. Seeing this, I ran as fast as my legs would carry me to the companion and entered their cabin, where, fortunately, a bracket lamp was burning. I overhauled the wearing apparel I found about the place and picked out Aunt Damaris’s bonnet and Florence’s hat, along with a cloak, a shawl, and some wraps; and with this armful I returned on deck, noticing as I passed through

the cuddy that it was deserted, and most of the cabin doors wide open. I attired the ladies in the things I had brought with me, and whilst I was thus occupied, endeavouring to encourage them by such plain practical talk as a sailor will know how to use at a time like this, the second mate, followed by eight or ten seamen, came along the poop and ordered the 'tweendeck passengers on to the maindeck. They hung in the wind, but the second mate was a blunt-spoken, sinewy fellow, and he had received his orders.

'Away with ye!' he cried, catching up the lantern and swinging it around him; 'you'll be no safer here than there, so off ye go. Why, you curs! where are the women, that you're all here about the boats without 'em? Off with you now, for you're in the road here;' and he and the sailors beginning to shove and push and show themselves in earnest, the fellows went away towards the maindeck, sullenly and reluctantly enough, as though they supposed the boats were to be kept for the cuddy passengers; the creature who had gone mad, as I took it, springing and dancing as he went, snapping his fingers and flourishing his arms, and hoarsely bawling that he was one of the elect and that there was nobody to be saved in that ship but himself.

When the poop was cleared the second mate and the others of the crew immediately applied themselves to seeing the boats ready for lowering. There were some 'tweendeck passengers still skulking in those boats, but so far as I could make out in the darkness, they were very roughly and uncereemoniously hauled out and trotted forward by the seamen, who were then posted in couples at the four quarter-boats and gig to guard them. Meanwhile I might judge by the grunting and screaming of pigs forward that they were clearing the long-boat ready for hoisting her over the side. Pray God, I thought to myself, that the ship lives till daylight at least; but this making ready with the boats was a terribly ominous sign, and for the life of me I could not forbear a shudder of despair sweeping through me as I reflected on the long hours of darkness which lay before us, and on the consequences of the rush which would take place if the bulkhead that stood betwixt us and eternity yielded to the pressure of the water that filled the fore compartment. Again and again I probed the deep darkness upon the sea in the hope of discovering some sign of the vessel that had run into us. If she were afloat she could not be far off; little more than ten minutes had passed since the blow of her stem had hove the *Strathmore* on to her beam ends, during which time we could have put but a short distance between her and us had she chosen to remain on the spot; but nothing was to be seen of her, so that, unless she had herself foundered, then most assuredly had she left us to our fate.

When the poop had been cleared of the 'tweendeck people, I caught sight of the cuddy passengers congregated around the companion; it was too dark to see more than the blotch they

made upon the shadow, but I knew who those people would be. I proposed that we should join them, and Aunt Damaris consenting, I took Florence by the hand whilst the old lady clung to my left arm, and walked over to the companion. Fourteen of the passengers were assembled here, and though one heard no strong demonstrations of terror or grief, sobs and sighs broke plentifully from the women, and one of the Joyces' little children cried continuously.

'Is that you, Mr. Egerton?' called out Captain Jackson, from the thick of the group.

'Yes,' I answered.

'Do you know,' cried he, hoarsely, 'if the captain or any of his mates mean to tell us what's happened and what are we to expect? *That* duty's his.'

'They're full of business,' I answered. 'Can't you hear them shouting. There's been disorder as bad as a mutiny among the 'tweendeck people, and the getting them quiet, and ascertaining the nature of the injury and providing for the safety of the ship, is as much as we have a right to expect of captain and officers at such a moment as this.'

'Do you know what the injury is?' exclaimed Mr. Joyce, speaking out of the gloom beyond the companion in the voice of a man babbling in a dream.

'A steamer has struck us and made a hole under the bow,' I replied; 'the fore compartment is full of water, but the collision bulkhead stands, and whilst it stands the ship is as safe as she's been at any time of the voyage.'

'This comes from the cursed habit of merchantmen neglecting to put their side-lights out when on the high seas,' cried Captain Jackson, whose temper rose in proportion as our danger seemed the less urgent.

'Where's the ship that struck us?' said Mr. Griffith, the doctor, shoving himself towards me, and speaking in a voice more like a gasp than a human note: 'has she left us?'

'I'm afraid she has,' I replied.

'Oh, Mr. Egerton, do you think we're in danger?' cried Mrs. Joyce, and the sobbing of the others ceased till I had answered.

'If the bulkhead stands we're *not* in danger,' I answered; 'if it yields without wholly carrying away, we have hands enough for the pumps to keep the water under. If the worst comes to the worst, then there are boats enough for all, we are right in the track of ships, and we have honest right therefore in any case to consider our safety assured.'

'Oh, if you speak the truth, thank God for your words! thank God for your words!' broke out Mrs. Marmaduke Mortimer, in a hysterical cry.

Noticing in the dimness that hung about the companion from the faint haze of light floating up the steps from the illuminated



cuddy that the ladies and children were uncovered, I exhorted the gentlemen to take them below, and have them properly equipped for any term of exposure that might be in store, begging them not to think that the danger would be more urgent because they took care to provide for whatever might happen. Some of them immediately acted on my suggestion. Just then Daniel from the fore-part of the poop shouted to the man at the wheel to put his helm a-starboard; some hands came running aft and rounded in the main-braces so as to lay the topsail aback. The wind blew fresh and keen from the southward, and the easterly swell came along in a dull roll out of the blackness that made the ship stagger again on the northward-running surges; there was very little noise now in the ship, forward you could hear the boatswain's strong voice directing some of the crew who were busy with the wreckage that way; there was a kind of humming too, down on the maindeck, as of a congregation of people eagerly talking, intermixed with the cries of children and sometimes the high-lifted voices of women; but the distracting rattling and slatting of canvas and gear aloft had been stilled, whatever work was doing was being done quietly and systematically, and one felt to a degree not to be expressed the wonderfully soothing influence of the spirit of discipline that had followed fast upon the first terrible confusion and alarm.

No sooner was the ship brought to the wind than a rocket was fired and sent up fair betwixt the main and crossjack yardarms by a man who in the blue glimmer I made out to be the third mate. The ghastly ball of fire shot strong through the wind, and broke at a great height in the deep blackness and sailed in a shower of blue spangles for a moment or two ere vanishing. The humming on the maindeck at the sight of that wild signal swelled up loud, with a groaning throughout the length of the labouring hull as though every timber in the ship were in sympathy with the fear that rushing ball of fire had kindled; but a few loudly-spoken words of command and encouragement from the chief mate, who was either among the people there or on one of the poop ladders, subdued the cries and exclamations. Another rocket was fired, and then a third. Whilst this last was sweeping upwards the captain came to us. By this time those of the passengers who had gone below had returned, and we made a fair crowd as we stood in the place we had chosen near the companion.

'Ladies and gentlemen,' said Daniel, in the plain, simple way of a seaman, speaking without a hint of the excitement that had made his voice febrile when he answered my question, 'I ask your pardon for not having come to you before. But your lives are concerned in the safety of this ship, and in looking to the ship first I hope I have served you better than by merely palavering you. You know what has happened?'

'Some blackguard steamer has run into us, backed out and left us,' said Captain Jackson.

'That is so,' exclaimed Daniel; 'but we are testing by those signals whether she has left us. If she be afloat she may return and stand by us. If she has gone down these rockets may enable us to save the lives of her survivors, if any there be, by bringing them to us.'

'Will the ship sink, Captain?' cried Aunt Damaris.

He answered her as I had; that the ship would float if the collision bulkhead withstood the pressure of the water. A whole volley of questions were then poured into him. What was to become of them, Mr. Thompson Tucker wanted to know, if the vessel did sink? Mr. Joyce asked if the bulkhead could not be strengthened. Captain Jackson stormed about the neglect in not putting the side lamps over. Indeed, I cannot remember what was said. I can recall Daniel's quiet manner, his hearty encouraging assurances, and that's about all; and my recollection is bright in that particular direction, because of the wonder I felt at the time that a man in charge of a ship that might sink at any moment, burdened with the fearful responsibility of the large number of lives in her, with the long black night before him, and for thousands of miles no nearer land than two little rocks lying dead to windward and as easily to be missed in open boats as an open boat is easily to be missed by a ship,—I say I remember him at that time because of the wonder he excited in me by his perfectly cool and collected manner, his answers made as quietly as if he were seated at the head of his dinner-table, and the wise encouragement he offered the ladies, not idly priming them with hope, yet making them understand that they were in no danger *then*, though peril might come, in which case he was there to deal with it.

Whilst he conversed with us I took notice that the second mate came along the poop and turned the men who had been stationed to guard the boats to the job of watering and provisioning them. Every lantern that the ship yielded had been brought on deck to encourage the people and enable the crew to work quickly and without confusion. Some of these lanterns were brought aft, and you saw the men going forward and then coming to the boats again, bearing beakers full of water, tins of preserved meats, bags of ship's bread, and such things. A fourth rocket had been fired, but no response had been made. One looked in vain into the deep gloom made weird here and there, low down, by the gleam of phosphorus or the pallid flash of foam; there was nothing to be seen but the black night stooping in one unbroken, sooty surface to the sea, with the fresh wind sweeping through it, bleak as a March easterly blast, and grim, straining sounds of spars and gear aloft.

'Captain Jackson, Mr. Joyce, gentlemen,' exclaimed Daniel,

'let me beg of you to hand the ladies below. No good can be done by keeping them in the cold up here. It'll hearten the others on the maindeck, too, to see you sitting quietly in the cuddy. Trust to me, gentlemen and ladies, to give you timely warning should the leak gain upon us. Already your safety is amply provided for.'

No one stirred. The wives seemed to cling to their husbands with a tighter hold, and there looked to be a huddling together amongst the whole group of us as though there was a general recoil from the thought of going below. The lanterns in the men's hands shed a dim light along the deck, and looking round our faces, which showed white enough with the eyes gleaming against the blackness beyond, Daniel caught sight of me.

'Jack Seymour,' said he, 'you're an old fish, an old shipmate and sailor. *You'll* know we want a clear deck and that it's cruel to keep the ladies here. For God's sake set our friends an example. Miss Hawke,' meaning Florence, 'let Mr. Seymour take you below—the others will follow you I am sure.'

They probably fancied he had forgotten my name when they heard him call me Jack Seymour. But Heaven knows it was no moment for wondering. I seized Florence's hand and said to her aunt, 'Miss Hawke, the captain is quite right. We're in the road, and as safe below as here. Pray take my arm and accompany me.'

She obeyed mechanically, seemingly half stupefied. I led her down the companion steps with Florence's hand in mine, she behind; we entered the cuddy, and I handed them to a sofa at the foot of the ladder. None of the others immediately followed, and I could hear Daniel expostulating and entreating. The cuddy lamps shone as they had at dinner. The deck was still littered with the crockery and stuff that had rolled off the table, and some of the cabin-doors swung open and banged to with the rolling and heaving of the ship. Maybe it was nothing but fancy, not fit to strike me anyway; yet I swear that the feel of the hull under my feet, now that we had a deck over our heads, was a sensation as if the fabric were *settling*, and she never rolled quickly to leeward but that the movement seemed the drowning lurch a ship will take before she puts her bows or her stern into it and goes down to her grave.

I sat between Aunt Damaris and Florence, chafing my darling's hand that was as cold as ice, and whispering whatever encouragement it came into my head to offer her, sometimes glancing from her marble-like face, with her eyes bright with consternation, though there was a look gathering about her sweet mouth that showed me her spirit was slowly returning—glancing from her, I say, to the crowd of figures huddled under the break of the poop, many of them fitfully turning to look in at us through the windows and the glazed tops of the cuddy doors, and plainly

hearing the bewildered growling of their voices as they feverishly conversed.

Suddenly the old lady said, 'Mr. Egerton!'

I looked at her, and she fixed her eyes like a pair of gimlets upon me.

'Is your name Jack Seymour?'

'It is.'

'Are you the—the gentleman whose attentions my niece was sent on this voyage to escape?'

'I am,' I replied.

She clasped her hands and drew a deep breath. She was too much confounded to speak. She rolled her eyes wildly over me, and then looked up at the black skylight, and then at me again. You could see the horror of our situation driving through the feelings her discovery had excited like a squall sweeping through and scattering a fog.

'Oh!' she screamed out, as if all these things coming together were too much for her, and affecting her mind, 'what have I been reserved for?'

'Miss Hawke,' said I, gently, 'this, God knows, is no time for anger, for explanation, for anything more than an earnest prayer that Heaven will watch over us and preserve us. I am here because I love your niece, Florence; there was no ocean wide enough to separate me from her.'

'Oh, Florence, Florence!' cried the poor old body, sobbing, though with dry eyes.

'Aunt,' said my darling, 'Mr. Seymour joined this ship without my knowledge. But when I knew that he was on board, aunt, I was glad, for I love him—indeed, indeed I love him—oh, never more than now! and I thank God he is by my side!' and she threw her arms round my neck, and wept grievously on my breast.

I kissed her and soothed her, and said to the old lady, 'I am not ashamed of what I have done. I would do it again, and again, and again;' and I felt the hot triumphant blood in my face as I held my darling to my heart, and fixed my eyes on Aunt Damaris's face. She eyed me with a look of stupor.

'And you are Mr. Jack Seymour, then—not Egerton! you are Mr. Jack Seymour—not Egerton!' was all she could say.

'I had as much right to be here as Mr. Morecombe,' I answered, in a low voice.

This put a kind of life in her. She gave a start and cried out, 'Don't speak of *him*! why did you not tell me who you were? Oh, Florence! how could you, how *could* you have deceived me so basely!'

My darling lifted her sweet streaming face. 'Don't say basely, aunt; don't say basely. He asked me to keep his secret, and I did so because I loved him. Basely, aunt! oh, remember why this voyage was undertaken! Was there no baseness in not telling

me that Mr. Morecombe was to join us? And which of the two,' she cried, in a victorious tone, that swelled high in her rich voice and smoothed every tremor out of it, 'would you rather have with us *now*—this sailor, whom papa cruelly misrepresented to you, or that——'

'Oh, I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it!' shrieked out the old lady, vehemently interrupting her niece. 'Oh, Mr. Seymour! I could forgive you if you hadn't—— Oh dear, oh dear! what a dreadful situation for me to find myself in!' and she buried her face in her hands and rocked to and fro as if she were in an agony of pain.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## WAITING.

So now the murder was out. Aunt Damaris at last, thanks to Daniel, knew who I was, but it was like confessing on the brink of the grave. What significance had my love-chase, my courtship, my masquerade, in the face of the tremendous calamity that had overtaken the *Strathmore*? Whilst Aunt Damaris sat rocking upon the sofa with her face buried, and Florence leaned against me within the embrace of my arm, Mrs. Grant and her daughter, followed by Mr. and Mrs. Joyce, the nurse and children, came below and seated themselves. It made one sorrowful to see those little ones, when the nurse and the parents lifted and hushed them in their arms, looking wonderingly and drowsily around, as if they could not understand why they had been snatched from their beds, and why they were not laid down again.

'You are wise to come below,' I said, addressing Mr. Joyce. 'In trouble of this kind, passengers never can give sailors too clear a deck to run about upon.'

'I had no idea that you had been a sailor,' responded Mr. Joyce.

'Yes,' said I, hanging my head, 'I was at sea for some years.'

'One should have supposed so from the manner in which you rescued my darling, Mr. Egerton,' exclaimed Mrs. Joyce, hugging the child to her, and giving me the name I had sailed under, though this reference to my having been to sea proved they had taken notice of Daniel's exclamation to me, and if so, then of the name he had called me by in his hurry and anxiety.

'If the ship sinks and we are saved by the boats, I suppose all that we have must be left behind us?' said poor old Mrs. Grant, who sat hand in hand with her daughter, speaking with an air of resignation.

'Oh, don't talk of the ship sinking!' cried out Aunt Damaris.

'Not yet, anyway,' said I. 'Pity it is not the other end of the night. But listen! do you notice there is no clanking sound of



pumps? The carpenter, you may be sure, is standing over the well with the sounding-rod, and whilst those pumps are silent, you may know that no water has penetrated the bulkhead, and that the ship remains perfectly safe.'

'It does me good to hear you talk,' said Aunt Damaris. 'I am sure you would not deceive us.'

'I would not, indeed,' I answered.

'How long were you at sea, Mr.—Mr. Seymour?' I told her. 'You must know all about it,' she exclaimed, edging up to me, so to speak, in her manner.

'I know enough to keep a faithful and vigilant eye on your and your niece's safety, and to place my life at your service, if my life can help you,' said I.

She turned her face aside, and said 'God bless you!' in a voice that was like that of a woman of eighty.

'If we have to take to the boats they must not separate us, Jack,' exclaimed Florence, loud enough for her aunt but not for the others to hear. 'I could not bear that.'

'We'll not speak of the boats yet, my darling,' I replied. 'We may never need them. If the bulkhead holds, the compartment being full of water will not hinder us from finding our way snugly enough into Sydney Harbour.'

But though I spoke thus, I had small hope. The *Strathmore* was a stoutly-built ship, but though her frames were of iron, the two bulkheads with which she was fitted—one forward and one aft, leaving the hold a long clear space—were of wood, as those fittings usually were in sailing vessels in those days. These bulkheads were formed of vertical plank tongued and tie-bolted, as it is called, and 'chinsed' or very lightly caulked, so that as water-tight divisions they could not be reckoned perfectly trustworthy, though, now and again, they had saved a ship. There was indeed the chance of the pumps being able to keep the ship afloat should the bulkhead *only* leak; but after such a blow as the steamer had dealt us, apparently cutting the starboard bow right down, carrying away spars and jibbooms forward, and causing the ship to heel over as if the colliding vessel would steam right over her, there was no telling the strain to which the bulkhead had been subjected; so that at any moment the weight of water in the fore compartment might, during a heave up of the bows, burst through the bulkhead, flood the hold in a breath, and send the ship, deep in the water as she already was with many hundreds of tons of freight, to the bottom like a stone. This was Daniel's fear, as he had admitted; but my own judgment in this respect hardly needed the confirmation of even his large professional knowledge.

Miserable it was to an eager, restless man like myself, to be sitting in that cuddy, inactive and waiting for something to happen. Yet I was but a passenger; I had been asked to set an

example; I could do no good on deck, for there were hands and to spare for such work as was to be done in the blackness, and haply I could have been more ill-employed than in striving to keep up the spirits of the poor women, and in cherishing and encouraging my darling, who had turned to me in this supreme moment even as a wife might turn to her husband, knowing him her best friend under God. Many a time since, when I have read of collisions, I have recalled that dreadful night and thought that if there is a kind of work in this world into which a man engaged in it should put the full honesty of his soul, knowing that hundreds of lives may depend upon every blow of his hammer, every fair rivet-hole, every sound fastening, it is that of the shipwright. You must go through it to know what it is to be in a ship in a time of disaster, and to feel that betwixt you and the bottomless deep there stands nothing but the labour of an artizan. If that labour be true, if he has toiled upon the fabric feeling always that precious human lives will trust him and face the dangers of the deep in the fruits of his handiwork, then when in calamity his workmanship is found staunch and his fellow-creatures are preserved by it, surely, all-silently, he has achieved a feat that for heroism of conscience raises him among the highest of life-savers. But if, on the other hand, his work is false, and those who trusted themselves to him, unquestioning, perish because the acquisition of a few infamously-earned pounds weighed more with him than the agony of scores of helpless creatures hurried into eternity, then may he understand that there is one sailor at least who denounces him as the vilest of murderers, the most infamous of assassins; and let those titles be worn by any man who is responsible for courting sailors and passengers into a ship which he knows to be ill-built, or ill-formed, or in any way unseaworthy. No, no; this is not too strong, mates; it doesn't tell half; I'm no fist at fine writing; I speak what I think, and what you'd think, had you sat in that cuddy, looked at the women there, at the groups showing in the light through the windows, heard the wash of waters, known the blackness that hung like a shroud outside, realised the frightful immensity of the ebony ocean in which we then were, and reflected that your own and the lives of the five-score souls who were in that ship hung not upon a few three or four inch planks, but upon the honesty with which they had been fitted.

In twos and threes the other passengers now came below, the last to arrive being Captain Jackson and his wife. The time passing, and nothing worse seeming to come to the ship than the blow that had hove her over, put a little spirit into most of us. The most dejected and downcast of us all was Mr. Thompson Tucker, who sat silent and miserably white, starting convulsively as if to rush on deck whenever the vessel rolled more heavily than usual, and constantly gazing around him with wild and

terrified eyes. I recalled the remark about him I had made when he joked over the dead seaman in the life-buoy, and thought to myself that for once in my life anyhow I had shown myself a prophet.

'They seem to have brought the ship to her course again, Captain Jackson,' said I.

'They have,' he answered. 'It's not what I should recommend. I should heave her to on the starboard tack, and smother the hole in her bow by thrumming a sail, and securing it round the cutwater and under the keel. If you can't stop a leak by fothering, you can ease the pressure of water upon the hole.'

'Depend upon it Captain Thompson knows what he's about, sir,' said Mr. Griffiths, petulantly.

'Knows what he's about!' shouted the navy man. 'Would this collision have happened had he had his side-lights over? It's all very well for his officers to defend him, but who the devil, I want to know, is going to make good the loss of my baggage and my wife's, if we've to take to the boats?'

'Oh, let us have no quarrelling at this dreadful time!' groaned Aunt Damaris.

'You'll not be the only loser, Captain Jackson,' said Mr. Joyce.

'Supposing there is any loss at all,' I added.

'If only our lives are spared—if only these little ones are preserved, the sea may take all else,' cried Mrs. Joyce, convulsively hugging her little girl.

'Nurse, why do not put little Tommy to bed? he is so seepy!' here piped out the mite in the nurse's arms, meaning by little Tommy, himself. 'Mamma, Tommy cannot seep in nurse's arms.'

This set my darling crying, and well it might; for, on my word, nothing makes a shipwreck sadder than children. They are ignorant of what is going on; they will play or prattle or lie slumbering peacefully down to the last moment; and to look from them to the fearful reality is to behold a contrast that might well break the heart.

Meanwhile, by order of the captain, of course, the stewards had returned to the cuddy, and had gone to work to clear the deck of the dinner-litter, and to place spirits and wine and biscuits as usual upon the table. It was now nine o'clock by my watch. Nothing more had been said to me by Aunt Damaris about my being Jack Seymour; indeed, for a long while, she had sat by my side without uttering a syllable, except when she had called to Captain Jackson not to quarrel. My left arm circled Florence, who leaned against me, and again and again I would say something encouraging to her, telling her to take notice how easy the motion of the ship was, how the pumps remained idle, a sure sign that the water was confined forward, and so on. Every word thus spoken she would answer with a loving smile or glance, or with a caress of her cheek upon my shoulder. We were lovers

without fear that dismal night. There was no more acting, no more taking care because others were looking on. We showed ourselves wedded in heart, as the others showed themselves who were wedded indeed; and never a word did Aunt Damaris say, who had the full truth of it now; she let her niece cling to me as if it were right that she should do so, whilst she herself stuck like a barnacle to my side, as if, even in one short hour, all the prejudices against that vulgar young sailor chap, Jack Seymour, with which she had been primed by Alphonso, had been swept away forward into the fore compartment and dissolved in the water there.

Seeing the grog on the table, I mixed a small quantity of brandy and water, and insisted upon Aunt Damaris and Florence drinking. I then called to Thompson Tucker to wake up and be a man, and attend to poor Mrs. O'Brien, and I also induced Mrs. and Miss Grant to drink, but the others I left to their husbands. I took care to swallow a nip myself, saying as I held up the glass, 'Here, ladies and gentlemen, I drink to the good ship *Strathmore*. She has carried us safely through two oceans and a half; she has the scent of the Australian shores in her nose, she knows the road, and under God who watches over brave English seamen—and there are hearts of oak in this vessel, Captain Jackson, though she mounts no guns—she'll not betray us!'

'Hurrah!' cried Mr. Griffiths; 'Hurrah!' cried Mr. Joyce; and little Tommy in the nurse's arms cried 'Hoowah!' You saw the poor people under the break of the poop crowding and elbowing round the windows to have a look at us when they heard this cheering. More yet was wanted, so still standing at the table and flourishing the glass I had emptied as a band conductor would a baton, I piped up at the top of my voice—

'Cheer, boys, cheer! no more of idle sorrow,

Courage, true hearts! shall bear us on our way!

Hope points before and shows the bright to-morrow—'

the best song, by George, I could have pitched upon for such a time; and hang me, boys, if, with the exception of Mrs. Grant and Aunt Damaris, they didn't all come into the chorus; I wouldn't let them off; one after another I *looked* them in, singing meanwhile with all my lungs, until the cuddy rang again with the hearty inspiring words and tune. Ay, shipwreck is the time to test the value of song-writing. Think of a sentimental ditty at such a moment! It would be worse than a green sea washing fore and aft. The man that can give people a song that'll put heart and life into them in spite of death grinning at them down through the skylight, is the lad for me, and were the whole ocean made of rum there wouldn't be too much of it for sailors to drink such a man's health in.

'Oh, Mr. Egerton, you're the boy to do us good,' exclaimed poor Mrs. O'Brien, still calling me Egerton.

I now said I would step on deck for a few minutes to have a look at the weather and get the latest news.

'Don't be long!' cried Aunt Damaris. 'I shall follow you if you are.'

I promised to return speedily, and bring the captain with me too, if he could leave the deck, and with a smile from my darling, I jumped on to the companion ladder and gained the poop.

It took me some moments to find my sight, for the night lay still a very dark shadow, though not so dark as it was an hour before. I stood a bit groping with my eyes, and by-and-by got the outline of the rail, the mizzenmast along with the loom of the yards, then the binnacle haze with the helmsman behind it like a blot of ink in the darkness over the taffrail. There was a very fine rain in the wind, more like mist than rain. Not being able to see forwards where the wreckage was, the ship seemed as usual. The phosphorus gleamed in the bows of the curling seas, and the cold breeze swept up shrill into the black canvas. But one thing I seemed to find—that the ship was down by the head, so deep there indeed, that every fall of her bows raised her stern high, and made the glooming deep forward look to slant up as tall as the fore yardarms. This was to be expected; but you wanted to be on deck to realise to the full your knowledge of a huge rent in the ship's bow. Why, it made me shiver as I stood staring forwards when the head swell lifted her, for *then* it came into one with a flash, that the weight of the water in the compartment was at such a moment full on the bulkhead, and that if *it* went, the ship would vanish in a few minutes. I spied two figures at the foremost end of the poop, and walked to them.

'Is that you, Jack?' said Daniel.

'Yes.'

'It was you that set them off singing, eh? I looked through the skylight when I heard the hullabaloo, and watched you beating the time into 'em with a tumbler. It's the help I want. It's like your old self.'

'What's been done, Daniel, may I ask? Have you managed to solder the old hooker's wound in any fashion?'

'All that can be done has been done,' he answered. 'We have got a sail over the bows, and the pressure of the driving stem should keep it over the hole, and it may relieve the bulkhead somewhat. A *hole* do I call it? Why the carpenter reports half the starboard bow smashed in, cathead and starboard forechannel gone, foretopmast gone at the cap, jibbooms gone, and that's only the beginning. The steamer's bows have cut clean through into the topgallant forecastle. If daylight ever shines upon us, you'll see nothing but a wreck forward.'

'The bulkhead's our bows; we're driving through it with nothing else,' said Daniel's companion, who proved to be Mr. Thornton.



'Are you wise in driving?' I asked.

'What's the difference, whether we drive or heave-to, man? The water'll come in anyway. Driving at least keeps the sail over the bow.'

'If the bulkhead goes, then,' said I, 'we go with it—without time enough to say our prayers!'

'Oh, if it carries away, it'll have to carry away aft,' replied the chief mate; 'and it can't do that bodily, I fancy, for the cargo's chock up against it. The plank may start under the pressure or the caulking fail, and let the water in faster than we can pump it out; and to jettison the cargo there to come at that leakage would imperil the whole bulkhead. But the water's not likely to come in in such a hurry as to drown us out of hand. At least I *hope* not.'

For a man to *hope* that a dreadful thing will not happen does not encourage one much.

'Can I say a word to you, Thompson?' I exclaimed. He drew away from the mate. 'Daniel,' said I, 'I don't think we must put any faith in that bulkhead.'

'No,' he replied, 'we must not trust it, though whilst it holds it's good. If it'll stand till daylight, without driving us to the pumps, I shall be satisfied.'

'Daniel, I wish to ask you as an old friend and shipmate, should it come to our taking to the boats, to allow me and my sweetheart and her aunt to be together.'

'I see no difficulty,' he replied. 'You can have charge of one of the boats and welcome. You shall know which when the time comes. Thornton and I must talk over that business of leaving the ship. If the ladies are willing to accompany you, they're welcome enough. But, Jack, this is a fearful blow,—a fearful blow for me, my lad.'

I grasped his hand. 'Of course it is, Daniel. A worse could hardly befall a shipmaster. But you have met it as a man, you are carrying it through as a man, and if God spares our lives you'll have a hundred witnesses at your back to prove how the thing happened. Professionally it will leave you unharmed, and in what other way can it injure you?'

'Heaven grant we all come safe out of it,' he exclaimed with a slight falter in his voice. 'Have you anything more to say to me, Jack?'

'According to our reckoning to-day, St. Paul's Island will be about a hundred odd miles away out to windward yonder.'

'Yes, yes, I know what's in your mind,' he answered; 'we have discussed *that* question and settled it. I'd rather take my chance of that bulkhead, and the pumps with such gangs as we can put to them, than ratch to that island with the likelihood of the ship going to pieces before we can land the few stores which remain. By holding on we may fall in with a vessel to keep us

company, and pull through the accursed job after all. But to fetch that island would be to cast the ship away. There's damage yonder that's not to be repaired out of dry dock; and you've got to realise what one hundred of us, men, women, and children, thrown upon that rock, would signify, lingering there may be for weeks, ultimately to rot away. No, no! let us push on—let us shove on.'

Well, in the marine calling there is more difference of opinion than in any other. Had I had charge of that ship, with her starboard bow torn out and nothing to trust to but a bulkhead, I should have tried for St. Paul's anyway, seeing it was the only spot of land amid thousands of miles of water, and, having landed the passengers and what stores I could have saved, have trusted to Providence—for much must be left to God in all things—to bring us help. But I was not captain, and that makes the difference; I could not think as captain. Daniel's heart was in his ship and cargo; he would wish to save her at all hazards; and, forlorn as his hope was, as he himself implied, still he would cling to even the ghost of a chance, knowing well what the salving of the vessel and her freight would mean to him who had not a State but a private firm of money-makers to serve.

He left me with a kind of impatience to rejoin Mr. Thornton, as if he was afraid I should begin to argue with him. I was now so used to the darkness that I could see with tolerable distinctness. The maintack had been boarded and the maintopgallant sail set. I went to the weather rail to see past the mainsail, and could just make out the foremast with the foresail pulling at it. It looked a big mutilated shadow. There being no more head sail accounted for the mizzen topsail being furled, and I wondered that even with the mainsail she should steer easily; but apparently, as the wind then was, the canvas upon her left her well under command of the helm. There were men at work in the gloom forward; you heard their voices but could not distinguish them. Lights gleamed on the main and quarter-decks, and, looking over the rail, I spied groups of 'tween-deck and steerage-passengers below restlessly flitting to and fro, or cowering in dark blotches under the bulwarks and near the cuddy front. The hoarse murmur of their voices rose along with the crying of babies and little children. But the panic among them appeared to have passed, and it was likely enough that the poor ignorant creatures were beginning to believe that the danger was over, though they would not trust themselves below yet. Cold enough it must have been for the women and children. Terror makes people cold, and when the wind is raw too, then you get the most grievous element of shipwreck—a degree of physical suffering which if protracted makes drowning welcome. The blackness on the sea was rendered startling by the sparkle of the green fires in it and by the ghastly coming and fading of froth. The breeze was fresh, but the ship sailed sluggishly, with a new

note in the surges which she threw from her, and a sickening dip of the head in every plunge that gave you the idea of her being giddy, and reeling in a fainting manner as she rolled along over the ebony folds which came swelling up against her lee bow. The sky looked to be a slow procession of ponderous shadows, thinning here and there, then thickening up again, so that sometimes you could see the maintopgallant sail floating and swaying black in the airier gloom, then melting out as the darkness drove over with a fiercer sweep of the mist-like rain in it.

'Thompson,' said I, approaching him, 'I promised to bring you with me to the cuddy when I returned. Nobody can hearten passengers like the skipper.'

'Oh, I'll go to them,' said he; 'though God knows I have little enough to tell them.'

We walked to the companion in silence. Ere slewing round to drop below I took notice of the naked mizzenmast, the dim blotch of the man at the wheel behind the binnacle, the liquid ebony of the sea making one with the black heavens, the wailing of the wind aloft, the rushing and seething sound of foam, and above all the sluggish sickening stoop of the stern when the swell drove under the fore-foot and lifted the horrible dead-weight of water that filled the fore compartment. Only a sailor perhaps would have felt *this*; but never to me was anything plainer in all my life.

There was a passionate expectation in the looks of many of the passengers as Daniel entered the cuddy, followed by me. They were all seated just as I had left them, and I at once resumed my place betwixt Florence and her aunt.

'What is the news, Mr. Seymour?' instantly exclaimed the old lady, giving me my name very easily.

'Why, that we are still heading for Australia, and that the ship's hold is free of water,' I replied.

'Are we still in any great danger?' asked my darling, as if she wished to think, dear heart, that our peril was not so formidable as it had been.

'Be easy, sweet pet,' I whispered. 'We *are* in danger; but it is not of a kind that need frighten us.'

Meanwhile, Thompson was mixing himself a sup of brandy and water at the table. The old familiar crimson of his face had faded away into a pale dingy red; care and grief were expressed in every line of his hearty countenance; nevertheless he had forced a cheerful look as he entered the cuddy, and preserved it as he stood bareheaded near a swinging lamp, the light of which glittered in the wet upon his cloth coat.

'Can ye give us any hope of reaching Australia in this ship, Capt'n?' asked Mrs. O'Brien.

'I'll make her do her best to carry you there,' he answered, smiling; 'if she fails it will not be my fault.'

'If she fails, what shall we do?' cried Mr. Thompson Tucker, breaking a long silence, and speaking in an extraordinarily hollow note.

'Why, sir,' replied Daniel, 'we have six good boats; one of them, the long-boat, is pretty near as big as the ship that Christopher Columbus discovered America in; two of the others are lifeboats, the gig's a clipper, and the others fit to sail round the world in.'

'Oh, but the idea of long exposure in an open boat at sea is dreadful!' cried Mrs. Marmaduke Mortimer. 'Ever since I was a child I have always thought *that* the most frightful part of shipwreck.' Her husband wrapped his arm around her.

'It's not so bad as drowning, ma'am,' said Daniel. 'But then the boats are our last resource. We're not driven to them *yet*.' And, giving her a smile, he swigged off the contents of his tumbler.

'How many souls are there altogether in this ship?' inquired Captain Jackson, asking the question with his arms tightly folded, his head down, and his eyes peering up under his brows.

'Ninety-five, sir; ship's company forty, fifteen in the steerage, twenty-three in the 'tweendecks, and seventeen of you ladies and gentlemen—ninety-five.'

'How many will your long-boat hold?'

'Oh, if it comes to the boats,' replied Daniel, speaking with the utmost coolness, though there was a deal of offensive imperiousness in the navy man's manner, 'the disposition of the people will be twenty-six in the long-boat, fifteen in every quarter-boat, and nine in the gig.'

'I hope in the name of God,' exclaimed Captain Jackson, 'that no blunders or omissions will be found out when it's too late. I speak with submission, but I know what the merchant service is; tackles won't travel; rowlocks and oars are missing; plugs are left out; there are masts and no sails to be found; rudders without yokes or tillers. It is a question of life or death, and I have a right in the name of my fellow-passengers to demand, as one who has used the sea and knows the life, that the precious time you, sir, and your mates now possess will be devoted to seeing everything ready for an emergency.'

'Everything *is* ready,' replied Daniel, eyeing him coldly. 'You say you know the merchant service, but you don't seem to be acquainted with its etiquette. I will thank you not to teach me my duty.'

'If you are speaking in the name of your fellow-passengers to Captain Thompson,' exclaimed Aunt Damaris, as viciously as ever she had spoken at any time during the voyage, 'I beg that you will omit *me* as one of those for whom you constitute yourself spokesman, Captain Jackson.'

'Ladies are ignorant of the dangers of the sea,' cried Captain Jackson. 'I have a right as a married man with my wife in this ship to urge upon Captain Thompson the necessity of amply providing for our safety.'

'I am quite ready to listen to any proposals you may have to make for providing for our safety,' said Daniel. 'Will you tell me what *you* would do if you had charge?'

The navy man did not answer.

At that moment Mr. Thornton called to the skipper from the head of the companion steps. Daniel, giving the ladies a little bow, went quietly on deck. I listened, not liking that sudden summons; but the call was so quiet and Daniel's departure so tranquil that the others appeared to find nothing alarming in it.

'You have been a sailor, Mr. Seymour,' said Aunt Damaris, in a low voice to me, 'and can answer my question: Is Captain Thompson doing all that he should to save the ship?'

'All.'

'Is there nothing omitted by him which he ought to do?'

'Nothing that I can imagine,' I replied; for there was no good telling her that in my opinion he ought to try to make St. Paul's.

She now fell to catechising me; asked me how long I was at sea, what made me quit the life, what my experiences were as a sailor. Suddenly, whilst in the midst of answering the last question, I stopped dead, hearing the ringing clank of the pumps on the maindeck. At any other time that sound would have passed unnoticed; but *now* the first note of it seemed to roll through the cuddy like a bitter blast, striking a deadly chill into every heart.

'Hark!' shouted Captain Jackson, sitting bolt upright, and lifting his hand; 'they have manned the pumps!'

'What does it mean?' shrieked Mrs. Marmaduke Mortimer.

'God Almighty, we're sinking!' howled Mr. Thompson Tucker, and, springing to his feet, he bolted like a madman to the companion ladder. In a breath, his behaviour created a panic. Seizing his wife's hand, Captain Jackson rushed on deck with her, and he was followed pell-mell by Mrs. O'Brien, the Joyces, the Mortimers, and Mrs. and Miss Grant. Florence's hand was on my arm and her eyes riveted on my face. Her aunt had jumped up, but I grasped her dress and detained her.

'For mercy's sake be calm, Miss Hawke,' I shouted; 'why, if it weren't for distraction of this kind shipwreck would seldom be the horrible thing it's made. Those pumps are manned because they have found out that water is running into the hold; but you may be sure that it runs slowly, or Captain Thompson would give orders to have the boats lowered. There is nothing to terrify one in a leaky ship, so long as the pumps act and there are people enough to keep them going. Sailors have declared to me that for years at a stretch they have sailed in nothing but leaky vessels. Until the bulkhead gives way—and the chief mate says it can't do that—I shall consider the *Strathmore* safe.'

The poor old lady, trembling all over and directing glances full



of fright, now at the companion steps, now at the skylight, now at the windows in the cuddy front, resumed her place, murmuring, 'I am sure you would not deceive me, Mr. Seymour, for Florence's sake.'

'Nor for your own,' I replied. 'I have the captain's permission to take you both under my special charge. It's not a moment for boasting, but *he* knows I'm not ignorant of the sea, and he would not concede to me such a trust as you two if he was not well assured of my judgment.'

'Oh, Mr. Seymour, I am quite satisfied to be in your charge—I am sure you are a clever sailor,' exclaimed the old lady, passing her arm through mine and hauling herself hard and tight against me.

'Hear *that*, Florence darling! Miss Hawke, listen!' I cried, as the seamen who were working the pumps broke into a chorus that came rattling into the cuddy with a hurricane note. 'Drowning men don't sing.'

It was indeed inspiring to hear their voices.

'Oh, Jack,' said my pet, taking my hand, 'I am sure no harm can befall us with you at our side.'

'I am so sorry,' exclaimed Aunt Damaris, holding on tight to my arm on the other side, 'that I did not know who you were until this evening. How *could* your papa, Florence, talk to me about Mr. Seymour as he did? How easily he is to be deceived! Thank Heaven you are with us, Mr. Seymour. Oh, if we are spared to reach Australia I shall have a long story to tell my stubborn, prejudiced brother.'

Just then the chief mate came into the cuddy. As he approached the table to mix himself a glass of grog, he said, 'You are wise to keep under shelter, ladies. Was it the sound of the pumps that sent the others flying? They've been heard often enough during the voyage.'

'But water must be coming into the ship, sir, or the crew would not be pumping,' cried Aunt Damaris.

'Why, yes, water is coming into the ship, certainly,' answered the mate, holding up the glass to the light to measure the quantity of brandy he poured into it; 'but it's being chucked out at the same time, d'ye see, Miss Hawke, and so it don't matter.'

'Where do you reckon it's coming from, Mr. Thornton?' I asked.

'Why through the bulkhead, I hope. Better there than anywhere else, Mr. Egerton. Don't want to think anything's been started abaft, you know. If the ship's sound from where the bulkhead begins to the sternpost, and the bulkhead don't cave in—and how's it going to do that with fourteen hundred tons of cargo abaft to shore it up?—why, the pumps may be able to keep it watertight, so far as we are concerned, until we reach Sydney.'

There was a tell-tale compass fixed to a beam just over the skipper's chair at the table; the mate stood near it as he con-

versed, and my eye going from his face to it, I noticed something that caused me to disengage myself from Aunt Damaris's arm and get up. A glance at that compass sufficed; the course had been altered to east-south-east, and the ship was lying as close to the wind as she would sail.

The meaning of this was that Daniel was making for St. Paul's Island.

I returned to the sofa, the mate looking at me hard. 'I hope,' said Aunt Damaris, addressing him, 'that you will not trouble yourself to deceive us.'

'Certainly not,' he answered, quickly.

'At all events, this gentleman,' she continued, meaning me, 'is not to be deceived. His name is not Egerton, but Seymour; he is an old sailor, and knows exactly how we are situated and what kind of danger we are in.'

I laughed and said, 'My old shipmate, the captain, will tell you my story, Mr. Thornton. My name *is* Seymour, and I had some years of service in this employ.' And pretending to have something to say to him about myself which I did not want the old lady to hear, I approached him and whispered, 'I see the course has been altered. Does the captain mean to try for St. Paul's?'

He nodded.

'Is the leakage heavy?'

He nodded again.

'She will have been strained by the blow abaft the bulk-head?'

He whispered, 'She is like a sieve to starboard from on a line with the cathead to abaft the forechains. The utmost we can hope to do is to keep her afloat till daylight. But pray keep this news to yourself. If the passengers get panic-stricken it may spread to the crew.' He emptied his glass and returned on deck.

'What was he saying, Mr. Seymour?' cried Aunt Damaris.

'Why,' I replied, 'you see it was necessary that I should round off what you told him about me. But there is a freemasonry among sailors, and we understand each other now.'

I looked at Florence as I said this; but the answer, clearly, did not satisfy *her*. There was intense wistfulness in her beautiful eyes, and her face had a marble-like gleam in the lamplight. Yet she said nothing; merely slipped her hand into mine as I sat down between her and her aunt, and for awhile we remained silent, listening to the clanking and pulsing of the pumps on the maindeck, the yearning moan of water washing and gurgling along the lee bends, and the creaking of bulkheads as the vessel rolled on the swell, which the shift of the helm had brought nearly abeam, and pitched over the surges which were now striking full against the mutilated starboard bow.

(To be continued.)

## *The Chase of the Wild Red Deer.*

**M**OST Englishmen know or think they know what fox-hunting is. Most Englishmen also have heard of or seen the hunting of the carted deer by the Queen's or other hounds. But of the chase of the wild red deer many have never heard, or, hearing, either deny its existence in England, or, putting their knowledge of fox-hunting and tame deer-hunting together, conclude that there is nothing peculiar to it which may not be known from a knowledge of those two. Nor is it until they are confronted with some such technical terms as 'harbouring,' 'tufting,' and so on, if then, that they begin to perceive that wild deer-hunting has characteristics quite distinct from all other English sports, chief of which may be said to be the important part played by a science now almost extinct in England—that of woodcraft.

Wild deer-hunting has existed in the Forest of Exmoor time out of mind, and still remains there only, so far as I know, in England at least. It is impossible here to give even a sketch of its history, which is fully told in Dr. Palk Collins' book on '*The Chase of the Wild Red Deer*,' generally acknowledged to be the best authority on the sport.

Exmoor also is a subject which has received much attention both from skilful and unskilful hands, but Charles Kingsley alone, I think, has approached it with true West-country sympathy; and every true lover of the moor must regret that but one '*Prose Idyll*' should have been devoted to it.

I, therefore, pass on at once to an account, necessarily imperfect, of the sport at the present day, merely remarking that it is carried on much as it was 300 years ago, the three main differences being (1) that the pack, owing to the extinction of the true staghound, is composed of large foxhounds (24½ to 26 inches in height), drawn from various kennels of Great Britain; (2) the narrowing of the moor limits, owing to the encroachments of cultivation; (3) the advent of strangers, welcome and unwelcome, from all parts of the kingdom.

Stag-hunting commences the second week in August and ends

the second week in October, after which hind-hunting begins, and is continued for a period varying according to the weather and the number of hinds that it is desirable to kill.

In stag-hunting success depends very much on the skill and patience of the harbourer, whose business it is to be able to show the huntsman where he may readily find a warrantable deer; for though in fox- and hare-hunting any fox or any hare may, roughly speaking, be run, yet in the case of deer it is necessary to find one, first, of the right age, and, secondly, of the right sex. He must, therefore, if possible, go round the covers the afternoon before they are to be drawn, and be out as soon as it is light next morning, to find out if there is a warrantable deer in any of them. To effect this object he visits the fields where he knows, or has ascertained, that the deer generally feed. He may come upon the 'slot,' or footprint, of the right animal in the first of them, or in the early morning he may from one side of the great wooded valleys see a deer enter the cover on the other side and lie down there. In such a case he *may* do his work in half an hour, and so completely that he could lay his hand on the deer. On the other hand, the ground may be so wet from heavy rain, or so dry from long drought, that it is impossible to 'slot' a deer; or the deer may have been feeding in grass meadows, where it is hard to distinguish between the slot of old or young deer, of stag or hind; or, again, the deer may have gone out in the heather, where no slot at all is visible. He is then obliged to make a circuit of many miles to some well-known 'rack' in a fence, or crossing place in a stream, to see where the stag has *not* gone; and even then he may often be able to give no more than the vague intelligence that there is a good deer somewhere in a wood of many hundred acres.

Many think that the harbourer's task is an easy one, and within the compass of any gamekeeper, if not indeed of their noble selves. But the best harbourer at present in the country, a man who has been employed in that capacity for many years and has studied his business carefully, will tell you that he wishes he had begun the work at seven years old, as in that case he might now, after thirty years' experience, be on the way really to know something of it. That, however, he really is by no means deficient either in skill, in woodcraft, or in energy, may be seen from the following brief account of the manner in which he contrived one day to bring the tufters close to the spot where a stag was lying.

He had slotted a deer into a large cover on the side of a valley, but on going round it, to see if the deer had stopped there or not, he found he had passed through it and not returned. He cast forward and slotted the deer again, and again further up the valley, across the river in the bed of the valley, and past a small wood into the fields above. Then he found the deer had turned and set his face for Lord Carnarvon's great woods at Haddon, which to the uninitiated appear almost interminable. Thither the harbourer had no time to follow him. He came to the meet and told his story, adding, 'He is sure to have crossed the lane into the cleave near such a place, and I have sent on a man to find the exact spot, so you can lay the tufters on his line.'

The deer, as it turned out, had crossed exactly where he said, and was roused in five minutes. The harbourer had thus been employed since daylight on an early October morning, and had to leave his work still unfinished to be in time for the meet at 11 A.M., sufficient evidence that his office is no sinecure.

The deer harboured, it is next necessary to draw tufters to find him. And here it is to be noted that a 'tufter'—in England, at all events—is not an animal *sui generis*, though I understand such is the case in France. With the Devon and Somerset, nearly every hound in the pack takes, in the course of the season, his turn at 'tufting,' and the choice of tufters is determined by circumstances. Thus, if the day be misty—not a very uncommon thing, especially in winter—steady old hounds that throw their tongues freely are taken: if the object be to separate one out of a herd of deer on the open, then, perhaps, one couple or two only of the fastest. Naturally the strongest and best-constituted hounds are generally preferred. It is, perhaps, superfluous to add that the reason for drawing with a few hounds is that deer are gregarious and found frequently in large numbers, when a full pack may be, as it not unfrequently is, divided in all directions.

There are three main tests by which it may be judged whether a stag be fit or not to be run: first, his track or 'slot'; secondly, his horns or 'head'; and thirdly—but never irrespective of one or both of the other two—the size of his body. The first is the sign which, in experienced hands, is the most trustworthy—indeed, the harbourer is, as a rule, entirely guided by it; it is generally accepted as infallible, but, curiously enough, it twice failed us during last season.

The 'head,' again, cannot always be relied on, for, as is well known, the development of the horn is greatly affected by the



quality of the food on which the deer lives, his immunity from disturbance and injury, and other causes. Thus, a four-year old stag will sometimes have the head of a six-year old, or even older deer, while the head of a very old deer goes back after a certain, or rather an uncertain, age, and becomes smaller.

In the days of which Mr. Palk Collyns wrote, two tines on the top of one horn ('two 'pon top,' as it is familiarly called) was in itself judged sufficient to make a warrantable or runable deer; and various masters have, we suspect, not unfrequently salved their consciences with this reflection after the death of a deer which certainly had not attained his fifth year, the age which the 'two on top' was supposed to indicate with certainty.

That a deer has a good body is often urged as a reason for running him forthwith; but it is rarely accepted without further information, unless, indeed, the report be made by one of the few who can be depended on to know whether a deer is big or not when the animal is alone, and there are no other of his kind in sight with which to compare him.

The reports brought as to deer by excited people, who have seen one or more go away, are extraordinary. To give but one instance: A stag had gone away in company with three hinds. Not knowing whether they had divided or not, the master rode forward to a group of excited people who were shouting their loudest, and asked whether they had seen any deer pass that way. 'Yes,' said one; 'three great stags, gone up over the hill.' 'Oh!' said the master; 'had they any of them horns?' 'No,' said the man, with more truth than could have been expected; 'none of them.' The master then at once knew what had happened, had the hounds laid on heel, and the stag, who had lain down behind, was duly roused.

Let us now suppose that the hounds have met at the top of the steep hill overlooking the sea above Porlock Weir. The harbourer approaches and tells his story, and the pack is kennelled in a farm a few fields away. The tufters are drawn, and the huntsman trots away with them to the cover, the whip, of course, with him, and two or three more; the rest of the field wisely remaining at the top of the hill, commanding a view of the cover below them, which is one of the long line of woods extending along the cliffs from Porlock for many miles westward and at least two eastward. Nevertheless, the harbourer is pretty certain of the spot where his deer is lying, for he has tried down the combes to right and left, and satisfied himself that

he has not passed there. Presently he stops and dismounts at a place where those with him can see that the bushes up and down a low bank on each side of the cover path have been disturbed. 'Here he crossed,' says he, 'and here he set down his hind foot when he went up the bank, and here I slotted him on the top:' and he takes up the stone he had put over the stag's foot-mark, and shows a scratch on the damp surface below, wherein the initiated detect the mark of the blunt toe and broad heel which indicate a warrantable deer. The tufters dash in at the place eagerly—very eagerly, seeing that some hours have elapsed since the deer passed; the whip has galloped off to one path; the huntsman takes another, and the rest of us a third—that running along the top of the cover. The harbourer's pony is lame, so he must go where he can and do his best. Presently a hound speaks. We are listening with all our ears, but as yet have not heard the crash and rattle of bushes, usual when a stag jumps up, nor do the hounds' voices sound like a find and a fresh scent. They are, however, evidently running something, and that in our direction. They come up to us, and, having seen nothing, we stop them and listen anxiously for a 'tally' from above. We hear none: but presently the huntsman arrives and gives the word to let them go on. They stream along the path in front of us, and as the huntsman follows them he sees where a deer has gone down the path in the contrary direction; it is probably the three-year old stag, too young to be run, that was disturbed elsewhere earlier this morning. He came this way, and the tufters are running his heel. Again they are stopped, and we draw over the same ground a second time. Again hounds speak, and this time evidently close to their deer. One of us gets a glimpse of a deer through the bushes, but cannot see what is before the hounds. Then a little calf trots up across the path, close to the sporting farmer who has waited behind us exactly in the right place to stop the tufters following it. The huntsman stops the rest of them from the line of the hind, who is following in search of her calf, and proceeds to draw lower down. This time he is more fortunate, and hits the line of the right animal without disturbing any of the wrong ones. He is roused, and the tufters are running him sharply, but he is fat and the day is hot, and he has no intention of making sport for us if he can find another deer to do it for him. So for an hour he beats the covers, looking for a substitute. The tufters, however, stick close to him, and at last force him into the open; and though he makes a final double, which gives him some

extra law, we are able to lay the pack on him on good terms. The hounds run him merrily down one long valley, over the next hill, and up the valley beyond, where he makes a gallant effort to reach the moor beyond; but the first hour in the hot cover has taken the keen edge off him, he is fat and scant of breath, and cannot face the hill. Down he comes to the water (as the stream running down every valley is denominated), and there the hounds get up to him. They race him down and beside the stream for more than a mile before it is possible to take him, not always, as will be hereafter explained, a very easy matter. Not such a run as a young deer, or even an old deer later in the season, would have shown. Then the case is very different. The deer breaks right 'out over,' heading straight for the open moor. The pack is laid on, and with hardly a whimper streams away. The field, if the ground be level and sound, thereupon wax exceeding bold for, say, three minutes. In five minutes the cunning ones are making their points in all directions, with followings of a size proportionate to the reputation which they enjoy for sagacity and knowledge of the sport. Meanwhile a large number follow the hounds down from the hill where they were laid on, plunge into the valley and rise the opposite hill. The deer has passed through high heather in the ascent, so the hounds do not gain much on us, and on reaching the top we still have the same advantage over them, but it will not be for long, for the sedge grass of the Forest is now close to us, and we shall have to do all we know to live with them there. On they press at a terrific pace; but we shall have a respite presently, we hope, for we are pointing straight for one of the larger moor streams, and the deer will surely have beat the water after such a burst. We pull up a moment and watch them. No! they were too close to him to give him time to wait, for the leading hounds at once recover the scent across the water and carry it up the opposite hill. We follow as quickly as we can, and as we emerge from the deep combe on to the high ground, a keen-sighted sportsman views him not far ahead of us, bearing to our right. The knowing ones have their cue from this, and they too bear to the right, where they know the ground is sound. On, for many a mile without a falter, across precipitous combes, over good ground and bad ground, over the yellow sedge grass and the purple heather, hounds racing mute all the time from the pace. They are pointing now for a terribly soft tract of ground, and the few, less than a dozen, have inward misgivings as to the possibility of living with them there. Now they have reached it, but they

stream up a rough track on the edge of it instead of going through the worst of it; the deer is hard pressed and cannot face the deep ground himself. Still on, and now they plunge down into the deep covers at the south-western edge of the moor. For the first time since the pack was laid on a hound speaks, and they hunt him down to the river at the bottom of the valley. The huntsman casts them rapidly down stream, the direction in which they have already cast themselves; they hit it some way down, and carry it on still down the valley, parallel to the river, with plenty of music now, for they are close to their deer. See! here he comes down across the meadow to the water again, and for the last time. The leading hound catches a view, and the pack races down to the bank and dashes up to him in the water. For a few seconds the deer turns to bay, and then he toils painfully on down the stream, kicking out right and left with his heels, and striking savagely at the hounds in front with his sharp-pointed antlers. Now he comes to a deep pool and swims swiftly down with the pack round him; he turns into the bank, and takes his stand there in shallower water, the hounds baying all round at a respectful distance, with the exception of an adventurous puppy which, mad with excitement, approaches within striking distance. Quick as thought the stag rears up and plunges down, his brow antler cleaving the water not two inches from the hound—a narrow escape for the latter. But the rest of the hounds dash at the deer before he has time to recover himself; and a cunning old hound has taken him in rear from the bank. He is down, and it is all over. One or two of those present, who have been watching their opportunity, at once jump in and secure him, keeping the hounds from him meanwhile. Then the knife does its work swiftly, and, curiosity having been satisfied as to the gallant stag which has given so fine a run, every man looks round to see who is there beside himself. More than there were with them an hour ago, somehow; where they can have come from is a mystery, but there they are, some twenty in all. But where are the 200 or 300 others who started? Some of the cunning ones are still waiting, with some diffidence by this time, at some point miles distant, where the deer should, in their opinion, have passed; many are still toiling along the line which the deer took, their horses hopelessly beaten, injuring their unfortunate animals to no purpose. Not a few are endeavouring to find their road home: if they succeed, they will have to lead their horses most of the way. Here is one of this last category, who has found a road to his great relief. Yet he does not look

cheerful. 'I got a bad start,' he says, 'and could not catch them, do what I would, and then I got bogged.' This last is an unnecessary remark; a glance at man and horse tells the whole story—the former is a mask of mud all down one side; the latter has evidently 'been in' up to his girths, and a sturdy farmer, watching the poor animal's progress, with his nose almost touching the ground and pecking at every stone, remarks that he considers it was not for want of galloping that young gentleman did not get on.

Hind-hunting begins directly after stag-hunting is ended, and is much harder work, as a rule, than stag-hunting, for there are no fat old hinds as there are stags, which can be killed in an hour or so. Moreover, during the autumn and winter the deer herd together in the open, and it is impossible to avoid disturbing a number of them; added to which a hind will always, if she can, join other deer, and thus hounds become scattered in the most heart-breaking manner. It is most aggravating, after running a hind hard for perhaps an hour, to find suddenly that they have changed perhaps on to a stag or several stags, or a mixed lot of deer, or even to a fresh hind. In fact, very often it is only after hounds have run two or three hinds nearly to a standstill, that it is possible to get perhaps half the pack together and kill one of them. There are, however, more favourable days, and of such I will endeavour to give an example.

The meet is at one of the gates of Dunkerry Hill, the highest ridge on the moor. A gale is blowing from the N.W., with occasional violent showers of rain, unpleasant anywhere, and especially in such an exposed place. The whole hill is shrouded in mist, and Arthur the huntsman trots down from the meet (where, perhaps, two people have met him) to a farm-house below on the spurs of the hill eastward. The master is not out, and all present agree with Arthur when he says, 'No use to begin yet, in this weather, but it may get better presently.' Twenty minutes later, after a sharp shower, the day gets brighter. 'No use,' says the huntsman, 'to wait any longer.' Tufters are taken out, and he trots down into a wooded valley to draw upwards towards the hill. The deer, he warns us, will certainly go straight to Dunkerry, and we must look sharp to stop them there. With this he disappears just as a squall of unusual violence sweeps down the valley. We follow some way and stop where we are sure to see the deer pass. Presently we just catch the note of the horn and the voices of hounds; then there is a rattle of branches and four



deer gallop past—two hinds, a male deer, and a yearling. They are pointing straight for Dunkerry, and we gallop round with the huntsman to meet the tufters there with the pack. Here the deer come up, one hind and the yearling together, and a single hind a little apart from them, the male deer a little behind them, also apart. A little galloping separates them still more; the tufters are stopped from the male deer and, with the pack, laid on the single hind. The mist has cleared off by this time, and we follow over the rough stones and heather, hoping that we may be lucky enough to stick to her. Hounds run on about a mile, and then suddenly a few couple leave the rest and turn down the hill; we see a hind and calf in front of them turning up behind the pack towards us. The hounds following them are stopped, and directly after two young stags and two more hinds and a calf jump up in front of the pack and turn also upwards; before we can get to them two couple have got on, and run a hind and calf into a little combe, where we see half a dozen more deer appear. The huntsman and part of the small field stop as many as possible and collect them, and the whip with one or two more gallops up the hill after the rest. 'What is to be done now?' everyone asks; 'with such a lot of deer on foot there is no keeping hounds together.' The huntsman answers not; he is watching something dark going along the side of the hill. 'There's a single hind,' he says, 'and there come that three couple of hounds after her. We can catch them there; she is turning our way a little. Off we gallop again, and catch them up as he said. Away go the hounds close to her, and we after them. Will she come back to the cover or keep to the open is everyone's thought, but no one has time to say a word. Now we have passed over Dunkerry from end to end, and cross a hollow, mercifully not steep nor deep, to the next common. If she breaks the next fence she is away 'to Forest,' and to our joy we see the hounds spring over it, heading straight over the open. On at racing pace for another four or five miles, and we have reached Badgeworthy Water. One glance at his hounds as they come to the water, and the huntsman gallops down stream as quick as he can. 'There she is,' he says, pulling up after a couple of hundred yards; 'they always go down the water after a burst like that.' 'I don't see her,' says one gentleman close to him. 'I do,' is the answer; 'there now she is,' and as he speaks we see her jump out on to the bank, only to re-enter a few yards lower down. But now the hounds are casting themselves down rapidly, as the

hunter knew they would, some on each bank, for they know their business well and care little for the stream, though swollen into a torrent by the winter rain. Now one catches the scent where she left the water and gives tongue. The hind hears him and crouches down close under the bank on that side with only her head above water; the hounds on the other bank pass her but stop just beyond, sure she is close by, but unable to make out where. Then a hound on the other bank catches a view, and up she jumps and trots along the bank as if she had no idea hounds were near, but in ten yards she meets the body of the pack, and, bucking over the high stone fence, makes her way with all haste up the hill, the leading hounds close to her. We, too, struggle up the hill, and after another mile are glad to see hounds turning towards us again. 'There she is,' says one of the two with the hunter, pointing to a hind 300 yards away. The hunter looks a moment and says, 'Fresh deer; I *do* hope they haven't changed on to her.' They have not, for presently they turn away from us again, but our hind is evidently hard pressed; the pace has told on her. A few minutes more, and she turns down to water in a combe a little to our left. The leading hounds are in view and straining every nerve; they are gaining on her, and she has not gone twenty yards down the combe when they come up with her. Then there is a heavy splash and loud baying; they have rolled her over in the stream, and the body of the pack are on her, while the leading couples are washed down below her by the flood. We jump off and run down to them, but she is drowned and dead before we get to her; a painless death—so much the better. 'A fine hind,' is the verdict of those who understand the animal, cheerfully and in every sense endorsed by those who do not; for from start to finish the time is given as one hour exactly, and the distance is certainly over eight miles as the crow flies.

It is not usual, however, to kill a good hind in so short a time (this one, indeed, had already been run before the pack was laid on her), and it is not safe to allow less than two hours and a half to run one to death. Hinds run as strongly as the strongest stag, and, as a rule, afford better sport. Hinds, however, are apt to run in a circle, though the circle is never a very small one; while a stag, if he be not too fat and heavy, will more frequently make his point boldly and take the shortest line to it. Hinds that are barren or have never had a calf run straighter, as a rule, than the others.

Deer, as is well known, are generally killed in the water. Occasionally, however, they are taken on dry land, and examples are not wanting of a stag being rolled over in the open like a fox. Hinds have no chance of defending themselves, and may be pulled down by a single hound; but a stag, especially an old stag, will often make a long fight for it in the water, and it is then dangerous to approach him. It is not often that men are injured by stags at bay, but the hounds are sometimes very severely handled; in the season 1882-83 not less than four were killed by them. It is needless to say that every effort is made to keep hounds at a respectful distance from deer at bay, and to shorten the final scene as far as possible.

Unfortunately, deer have a nasty trick of taking to water in a broader sense, viz. going to sea, which is, perhaps, worse than a fox going to ground. This is a common occurrence, and some of the best runs on record have ended in the Bristol Channel. It is, no doubt, a pretty sight on a bright, warm day, to look down some hundreds of feet on a stag swimming out with hounds behind him in the clear, blue water; but it is a doubtful amusement to stand in bitter cold wind and rain on the top of the cliffs, keeping a deer in sight till a boat can be procured from perhaps three or four miles off. It is even less amusing to scramble down perpendicular cliffs to the hounds when the deer is brought in or voluntarily returns, and reascending them afterwards is worse again. Deer swim with wonderful power, and often go out long distances even against a heavy sea; hounds also will sometimes follow them a long way, occasionally overtaking and drowning them.

Indeed, it is extraordinary how readily and eagerly hounds will face water, even in the depth of winter and when swollen by heavy rain, in pursuit of a deer; and even more extraordinary is the sagacity they display on coming to water in the course of a run. Without the slightest help some will remain on one bank and others cross to the other, and they will then cast themselves up or down stream in the direction (generally the right one) to which the deer inclined on entering the water. Some will then keep in under the bank and wind every bush, branch, and twig which the deer may have brushed in his progress; if any rock should appear above the water in mid-stream, they will swim over and try it; and hounds have even been seen to get on such a rock, and rear up to reach the branches hanging over the stream above them. This water-work, unfortunately, tells severely on them, and wears them out more rapidly than would otherwise be the case.

Taken altogether, in spite of the severity of the weather on the exposed moor in winter, hind-hunting is better sport than stag-hunting. One great charm of the former is the smallness of the field, which rarely exceeds a dozen in number; but of this dozen every one is of the right sort, which cannot be said of the hundreds that come to the meets during the stag-hunting season. A very large number of these come, perhaps with pardonable curiosity, to see a wild deer—not by any means necessarily the deer that is to be hunted, but any deer that blandishment or bribery can induce anybody to show them. Thus they will, unless carefully watched by the master, scatter themselves all over the place, never giving the deer a fair chance to make his point and go away, frequently holloaing to the wrong animal, and, what is worst of all, galloping after the right one. A deer, especially a big stag, is not difficult to keep in sight in the open for a short distance, and the apparently slow canter at which he travels invariably draws a number into the delusion that they can catch him themselves. With this object, therefore, if they can get a chance, they will gallop like madmen, regardless of the hounds, until they find that the deer is too swift for them. When a stag turns to bay they will crowd round him, never giving the young hounds a chance of getting a good view of their game. Nor are such ways confined to the ignorant and foolish only. Many who should and do know better, and would be afraid to ride at a fox, think nothing of spoiling the day's sport by riding at a deer. So it is, and so there is reason to fear it will be, until one day, as is far from unlikely, some maddened, furious old stag charges into the press of them, when it may be they will learn to be more careful and less disobliging.

It is impossible to state even approximately how many deer there are in the country—one thing is certain, that they are very numerous. It is not uncommon in a single day's hind-hunting to see forty or fifty, or even eighty, deer without going far or disturbing any great tract of country. This is no doubt owing to the hearty goodwill evinced by the farmers and landowners towards the sport, without which the red deer would be extinct as a wild animal in Devon and Somerset. Deer do a great deal of damage in turnip and corn-fields, and if once they take a liking for some particular field or fields, it is difficult to keep them out; but it is very rarely indeed that foul play or powder and shot are resorted to, though, of course, there are black sheep in every flock. It is true that the venison is distributed among the

farmers, and that there is a damage fund to meet some of the losses they may incur owing to the encroachments of deer, but the goodwill shown by them for the most part is not of the kind that is bought by venison or money. A farmer, though he may and does complain of the damage, nevertheless feels a pride in the big stag which is the cause of it, and his delight when the deer is found where he predicted, run and fairly killed, is the delight of a sportsman and not of a lover of venison.

Altogether the sport is in as good case and has as many friends now as it ever had before; and, though the 'outward demonstrations are not now so marked as formerly, it has, perhaps, even a greater hold on the good people of North Devon and West Somerset at the present day than when the church bells were rung at the death of a good stag, and 'As pants the hart' was sung in the parish church on the first Sunday of the stag-hunting season.

J. W. FORTESCUE.



LINES  
BY THE COUNTESS OF CORK  
IN MEMORY OF HER KINSMAN  
*Charles John, Earl Canning,*  
FIRST Viceroy of India.

BURIED BESIDE HIS FATHER IN WESTMINSTER ABBEY.

GREAT son of almost equal sire,  
Left to us but in marble now!  
What youthful heart shall beat the higher  
For gazing on that classic brow!<sup>1</sup>

What future minds of thee shall learn  
To stand, withstand, to bear, forbear,  
From just resolve nor swerve nor turn,  
Nor bend 'neath crushing weight of care!

An empire tottered to its base,  
Wild panic overspread the land,—  
Reason to rage had given place  
But for that firm restraining hand.

He brav'd the storm, watch'd, guarded, toiled,  
Till "Clemency's" opprobrious name  
Upon the clamourers recoiled,  
His glory, and their lasting shame!

Then, amid honours grandly won,  
And—valued most—his sovereign's praise,  
The statesman's work on earth was done,—  
With end of work came end of days.

So as, when conquering fight is o'er,  
On field of battle soldiers lie,  
Heart-stricken, bowed with anguish sore,  
The widower came home to die.

And so two generations sleep,  
'Neath fretted roof, in vaulted bed,  
While silent watch two statues keep,  
And in their names their lives are read.

<sup>1</sup> Macdonald the sculptor pronounced the upper part of Lord Canning's face the most classical he had ever modelled.

## *The Art of Fiction.*

I SHOULD not have affixed so comprehensive a title to these few remarks, necessarily wanting in any completeness, upon a subject the full consideration of which would carry us far, did I not seem to discover a pretext for my temerity in the interesting pamphlet lately published under this name by Mr. Walter Besant. Mr. Besant's lecture at the Royal Institution—the original form of his pamphlet—appears to indicate that many persons are interested in the art of fiction and are not indifferent to such remarks as those who practise it may attempt to make about it. I am therefore anxious not to lose the benefit of this favourable association, and to edge in a few words under cover of the attention which Mr. Besant is sure to have excited. There is something very encouraging in his having put into form certain of his ideas on the mystery of story-telling.

It is a proof of life and curiosity—curiosity on the part of the brotherhood of novelists, as well as on the part of their readers. Only a short time ago it might have been supposed that the English novel was not what the French call *discutable*. It had no air of having a theory, a conviction, a consciousness of itself behind it—of being the expression of an artistic faith, the result of choice and comparison. I do not say it was necessarily the worse for that; it would take much more courage than I possess to intimate that the form of the novel, as Dickens and Thackeray (for instance) saw it, had any taint of incompleteness. It was, however, *naïf* (if I may help myself out with another French word); and, evidently, if it is destined to suffer in any way for having lost its *naïveté*, it has now an idea of making sure of the corresponding advantages. During the period I have alluded to there was a comfortable, good-humoured feeling abroad that a novel is a novel, as a pudding is a pudding, and that this was the end of it. But within a year or two, for some reason or other, there have been signs of returning animation—the era of discussion would appear to have been to a certain extent opened. Art lives upon discussion, upon experiment, upon curiosity, upon variety of attempt, upon the exchange of views and the comparison of standpoints; and there

is a presumption that those times when no one has anything particular to say about it, and has no reason to give for practice or preference, though they may be times of genius, are not times of development, are times, possibly even, a little, of dulness. The successful application of any art is a delightful spectacle, but the theory, too, is interesting; and though there is a great deal of the latter without the former, I suspect there has never been a genuine success that has not had a latent core of conviction. Discussion, suggestion, formulation, these things are fertilizing when they are frank and sincere. Mr. Besant has set an excellent example in saying what he thinks, for his part, about the way in which fiction should be written, as well as about the way in which it should be published; for his view of the 'art,' carried on into an appendix, covers that too. Other labourers in the same field will doubtless take up the argument, they will give it the light of their experience, and the effect will surely be to make our interest in the novel a little more what it had for some time threatened to fail to be—a serious, active, inquiring interest, under protection of which this delightful study may, in moments of confidence, venture to say a little more what it thinks of itself.

It must take itself seriously for the public to take it so. The old superstition about fiction being 'wicked' has doubtless died out in England; but the spirit of it lingers in a certain oblique regard directed toward any story which does not more or less admit that it is only a joke. Even the most jocular novel feels in some degree the weight of the proscription that was formerly directed against literary levity; the jocularity does not always succeed in passing for gravity. It is still expected, though perhaps people are ashamed to say it, that a production which is after all only a 'make believe' (for what else is a 'story?') shall be in some degree apologetic—shall renounce the pretension of attempting really to compete with life. This, of course, any sensible wide-awake story declines to do, for it quickly perceives that the tolerance granted to it on such a condition is only an attempt to stifle it, disguised in the form of generosity. The old Evangelical hostility to the novel, which was as explicit as it was narrow, and which regarded it as little less favourable to our immortal part than a stage-play, was in reality far less insulting. The only reason for the existence of a novel is that it *does* compete with life. When it ceases to compete as the canvas of the painter competes, it will have arrived at a very strange pass. It is not expected of the picture that it will make itself humble in order to

be forgiven; and the analogy between the art of the painter and the art of the novelist is, so far as I am able to see, complete. Their inspiration is the same, their process (allowing for the different quality of the vehicle) is the same, their success is the same. They may learn from each other, they may explain and sustain each other. Their cause is the same, and the honour of one is the honour of another. Peculiarities of manner, of execution, that correspond on either side, exist in each of them and contribute to their development. The Mahometans think a picture an unholy thing, but it is a long time since any Christian did, and it is therefore the more odd that in the Christian mind the traces (dissimulated though they may be) of a suspicion of the sister art should linger to this day. The only effectual way to lay it to rest is to emphasize the analogy to which I just alluded—to insist on the fact that as the picture is reality, so the novel is history. That is the only general description (which does it justice) that we may give of the novel. But history also is allowed to compete with life, as I say; it is not, any more than painting, expected to apologize. The subject-matter of fiction is stored up likewise in documents and records, and if it will not give itself away, as they say in California, it must speak with assurance, with the tone of the historian. Certain accomplished novelists have a habit of giving themselves away which must often bring tears to the eyes of people who take their fiction seriously. I was lately struck, in reading over many pages of Anthony Trollope, with his want of discretion in this particular. In a digression, a parenthesis or an aside, he concedes to the reader that he and this trusting friend are only 'making believe.' He admits that the events he narrates have not really happened, and that he can give his narrative any turn the reader may like best. Such a betrayal of a sacred office seems to me, I confess, a terrible crime; it is what I mean by the attitude of apology, and it shocks me every whit as much in Trollope as it would have shocked me in Gibbon or Macaulay. It implies that the novelist is less occupied in looking for the truth than the historian, and in doing so it deprives him at a stroke of all his standing-room. To represent and illustrate the past, the actions of men, is the task of either writer, and the only difference that I can see is, in proportion as he succeeds, to the honour of the novelist, consisting as it does in his having more difficulty in collecting his evidence, which is so far from being purely literary. It seems to me to give him a great character, the fact that he has at once so much in common

with the philosopher and the painter; this double analogy is a magnificent heritage.

It is of all this evidently that Mr. Besant is full when he insists upon the fact that fiction is one of the *fine arts*, deserving in its turn of all the honours and emoluments that have hitherto been reserved for the successful profession of music, poetry, painting, architecture. It is impossible to insist too much on so important a truth, and the place that Mr. Besant demands for the work of the novelist may be represented, a trifle less abstractly, by saying that he demands not only that it shall be reputed artistic, but that it shall be reputed very artistic indeed. It is excellent that he should have struck this note, for his doing so indicates that there was need of it, that his proposition may be to many people a novelty. One rubs one's eyes at the thought; but the rest of Mr. Besant's essay confirms the revelation. I suspect, in truth, that it would be possible to confirm it still further, and that one would not be far wrong in saying that in addition to the people to whom it has never occurred that a novel ought to be artistic, there are a great many others who, if this principle were urged upon them, would be filled with an indefinable mistrust. They would find it difficult to explain their repugnance, but it would operate strongly to put them on their guard. 'Art,' in our Protestant communities, where so many things have got so strangely twisted about, is supposed, in certain circles, to have some vaguely injurious effect upon those who make it an important consideration, who let it weigh in the balance. It is assumed to be opposed in some mysterious manner to morality, to amusement, to instruction. When it is embodied in the work of the painter (the sculptor is another affair!) you know what it is; it stands there before you, in the honesty of pink and green and a gilt frame; you can see the worst of it at a glance, and you can be on your guard. But when it is introduced into literature it becomes more insidious—there is danger of its hurting you before you know it. Literature should be either instructive or amusing, and there is in many minds an impression that these artistic preoccupations, the search for form, contribute to neither end, interfere indeed with both. They are too frivolous to be edifying, and too serious to be diverting; and they are, moreover, priggish and paradoxical and superfluous. That, I think, represents the manner in which the latent thought of many people who read novels as an exercise in skipping would explain itself if it were to become articulate. They would argue, of course, that a novel ought to be 'good,' but



they would interpret this term in a fashion of their own, which, indeed, would vary considerably from one critic to another. One would say that being good means representing virtuous and aspiring characters, placed in prominent positions; another would say that it depends for a 'happy ending' on a distribution at the last of prizes, pensions, husbands, wives, babies, millions, appended paragraphs and cheerful remarks. Another still would say that it means being full of incident and movement, so that we shall wish to jump ahead, to see who was the mysterious stranger, and if the stolen will was ever found, and shall not be distracted from this pleasure by any tiresome analysis or 'description.' But they would all agree that the 'artistic' idea would spoil some of their fun. One would hold it accountable for all the description, another would see it revealed in the absence of sympathy. Its hostility to a happy ending would be evident, and it might even, in some cases, render any ending at all impossible. The 'ending' of a novel is, for many persons, like that of a good dinner, a course of dessert and ices, and the artist in fiction is regarded as a sort of meddlesome doctor who forbids agreeable aftertastes. It is therefore true that this conception of Mr. Besant's, of the novel as a superior form, encounters not only a negative but a positive indifference. It matters little that, as a work of art, it should really be as little or as much concerned to supply happy endings, sympathetic characters, and an objective tone, as if it were a work of mechanics; the association of ideas, however incongruous, might easily be too much for it if an eloquent voice were not sometimes raised to call attention to the fact that it is at once as free and as serious a branch of literature as any other.

Certainly, this might sometimes be doubted in presence of the enormous number of works of fiction that appeal to the credulity of our generation, for it might easily seem that there could be no great substance in a commodity so quickly and easily produced. It must be admitted that good novels are somewhat compromised by bad ones, and that the field, at large, suffers discredit from overcrowding. I think, however, that this injury is only superficial, and that the superabundance of written fiction proves nothing against the principle itself. It has been vulgarised, like all other kinds of literature, like everything else, to-day, and it has proved more than some kinds accessible to vulgarisation. But there is as much difference as there ever was between a good novel and a bad one: the bad is swept, with all the daubed

canvases and spoiled marble, into some unvisited limbo or infinite rubbish-yard, beneath the back-windows of the world, and the good subsists and emits its light and stimulates our desire for perfection. As I shall take the liberty of making but a single criticism of Mr. Besant, whose tone is so full of the love of his art, I may as well have done with it at once. He seems to me to mistake in attempting to say so definitely beforehand what sort of an affair the good novel will be. To indicate the danger of such an error as that has been the purpose of these few pages; to suggest that certain traditions on the subject, applied *a priori*, have already had much to answer for, and that the good health of an art which undertakes so immediately to reproduce life must demand that it be perfectly free. It lives upon exercise, and the very meaning of exercise is freedom. The only obligation to which in advance we may hold a novel without incurring the accusation of being arbitrary, is that it be interesting. That general responsibility rests upon it, but it is the only one I can think of. The ways in which it is at liberty to accomplish this result (of interesting us) strike me as innumerable and such as can only suffer from being marked out, or fenced in, by prescription. They are as various as the temperament of man, and they are successful in proportion as they reveal a particular mind, different from others. A novel is in its broadest definition a personal impression of life; that, to begin with, constitutes its value, which is greater or less according to the intensity of the impression. But there will be no intensity at all, and therefore no value, unless there is freedom to feel and say. The tracing of a line to be followed, of a tone to be taken, of a form to be filled out, is a limitation of that freedom and a suppression of the very thing that we are most curious about. The form, it seems to me, is to be appreciated after the fact; then the author's choice has been made, his standard has been indicated; then we can follow lines and directions and compare tones. Then, in a word, we can enjoy one of the most charming of pleasures, we can estimate quality, we can apply the test of execution. The execution belongs to the author alone; it is what is most personal to him, and we measure him by that. The advantage, the luxury, as well as the torment and responsibility of the novelist, is that there is no limit to what he may attempt as an executant—no limit to his possible experiments, efforts, discoveries, successes. Here it is especially that he works, step by step, like his brother of the brush, of whom we may always say that he has painted his picture in a manner best

known to himself. His manner is his secret, not necessarily a deliberate one. He cannot disclose it, as a general thing, if he would; he would be at a loss to teach it to others. I say this with a due recollection of having insisted on the community of method of the artist who paints a picture and the artist who writes a novel. The painter *is* able to teach the rudiments of his practice, and it is possible, from the study of good work (granted the aptitude), both to learn how to paint and to learn how to write. Yet it remains true, without injury to the *rapprochement*, that the literary artist would be obliged to say to his pupil much more than the other, 'Ah, well, you must do it as you can!' It is a question of degree, a matter of delicacy. If there are exact sciences there are also exact arts, and the grammar of painting is so much more definite that it makes the difference.

I ought to add, however, that if Mr. Besant says at the beginning of his essay that the 'laws of fiction may be laid down and taught with as much precision and exactness as the laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion,' he mitigates what might appear to be an over-statement by applying his remark to 'general' laws, and by expressing most of these rules in a manner with which it would certainly be unaccommodating to disagree. That the novelist must write from his experience, that his 'characters must be real and such as might be met with in actual life;' that 'a young lady brought up in a quiet country village should avoid descriptions of garrison life,' and 'a writer whose friends and personal experiences belong to the lower middle-class should carefully avoid introducing his characters into Society;' that one should enter one's notes in a common-place book; that one's figures should be clear in outline; that making them clear by some trick of speech or of carriage is a bad method, and 'describing them at length' is a worse one; that English Fiction should have a 'conscious moral purpose;' that 'it is almost impossible to estimate too highly the value of careful workmanship—that is, of style;' that 'the most important point of all is the story,' that 'the story is everything'—these are principles with most of which it is surely impossible not to sympathise. That remark about the lower middle-class writer and his knowing his place is perhaps rather chilling; but for the rest, I should find it difficult to dissent from any one of these recommendations. At the same time I should find it difficult positively to assent to them, with the exception, perhaps, of the injunction as to entering one's notes in a common-place book. They scarcely seem to me to have the

quality that Mr. Besant attributes to the rules of the novelist—the ‘precision and exactness’ of ‘the laws of harmony, perspective, and proportion.’ They are suggestive, they are even inspiring, but they are not exact, though they are doubtless as much so as the case admits of; which is a proof of that liberty of interpretation for which I just contended. For the value of these different injunctions—so beautiful and so vague—is wholly in the meaning one attaches to them. The characters, the situation, which strike one as real will be those that touch and interest one most, but the measure of reality is very difficult to fix. The reality of Don Quixote or of Mr. Micawber is a very delicate shade; it is a reality so coloured by the author’s vision that, vivid as it may be, one would hesitate to propose it as a model; one would expose one’s self to some very embarrassing questions on the part of a pupil. It goes without saying that you will not write a good novel unless you possess the sense of reality; but it will be difficult to give you a recipe for calling that sense into being. Humanity is immense and reality has a myriad forms; the most one can affirm is that some of the flowers of fiction have the odour of it, and others have not; as for telling you in advance how your nosegay should be composed, that is another affair. It is equally excellent and inconclusive to say that one must write from experience; to our supposititious aspirant such a declaration might savour of mockery. What kind of experience is intended, and where does it begin and end? Experience is never limited and it is never complete; it is an immense sensibility, a kind of huge spider-web, of the finest silken threads, suspended in the chamber of consciousness and catching every air-borne particle in its tissue. It is the very atmosphere of the mind; and when the mind is imaginative—much more when it happens to be that of a man of genius—it takes to itself the faintest hints of life, it converts the very pulses of the air into revelations. The young lady living in a village has only to be a damsel upon whom nothing is lost to make it quite unfair (as it seems to me) to declare to her that she shall have nothing to say about the military. Greater miracles have been seen than that, imagination assisting, she should speak the truth about some of these gentlemen. I remember an English novelist, a woman of genius, telling me that she was much commended for the impression she had managed to give in one of her tales of the nature and way of life of the French Protestant youth. She had been asked where she learned so much about this recondite being, she had been con-

gratulated on her peculiar opportunities. These opportunities consisted in her having once, in Paris, as she ascended a staircase, passed an open door where, in the household of a *pasteur*, some of the young Protestants were seated at table round a finished meal. The glimpse made a picture; it lasted only a moment, but that moment was experience. She had got her impression, and she evolved her type. She knew what youth was, and what Protestantism; she also had the advantage of having seen what it was to be French; so that she converted these ideas into a concrete image and produced a reality. Above all, however, she was blessed with the faculty which when you give it an inch takes an ell, and which for the artist is a much greater source of strength than any accident of residence or of place in the social scale. The power to guess the unseen from the seen, to trace the implication of things, to judge the whole piece by the pattern, the condition of feeling life, in general, so completely that you are well on your way to knowing any particular corner of it—this cluster of gifts may almost be said to constitute experience, and they occur in country and in town, and in the most differing stages of education. If experience consists of impressions, it may be said that impressions *are* experience, just as (have we not seen it?) they are the very air we breathe. Therefore, if I should certainly say to a novice, 'Write from experience, and experience only,' I should feel that this was a rather tantalising monition if I were not careful immediately to add, 'Try to be one of the people on whom nothing is lost!'

I am far from intending by this to minimise the importance of exactness—of truth of detail. One can speak best from one's own taste, and I may therefore venture to say that the air of reality (solidity of specification) seems to me to be the supreme virtue of a novel—the merit in which all its other merits (including that conscious moral purpose of which Mr. Besant speaks) helplessly and submissively depend. If it be not there, they are all as nothing, and if these be there, they owe their effect to the success with which the author has produced the illusion of life. The cultivation of this success, the study of this exquisite process, form, to my taste, the beginning and the end of the art of the novelist. They are his inspiration, his despair, his reward, his torment, his delight. It is here, in very truth, that he competes with life; it is here that he competes with his brother the painter, in *his* attempt to render the look of things, the look that conveys their meaning, to catch the colour, the relief, the expression, the surface,



the substance of the human spectacle. It is in regard to this that Mr. Besant is well inspired when he bids him take notes. He cannot possibly take too many, he cannot possibly take enough. All life solicits him, and to 'render' the simplest surface, to produce the most momentary illusion, is a very complicated business. His case would be easier, and the rule would be more exact, if Mr. Besant had been able to tell him what notes to take. But this I fear he can never learn in any hand-book; it is the business of his life. He has to take a great many in order to select a few, he has to work them up as he can, and even the guides and philosophers who might have most to say to him must leave him alone when it comes to the application of precepts, as we leave the painter in communion with his palette. That his characters 'must be clear in outline,' as Mr. Besant says—he feels that down to his boots; but how he shall make them so is a secret between his good angel and himself. It would be absurdly simple if he could be taught that a great deal of 'description' would make them so, or that, on the contrary, the absence of description and the cultivation of dialogue, or the absence of dialogue and the multiplication of 'incident,' would rescue him from his difficulties. Nothing, for instance, is more possible than that he be of a turn of mind for which this odd, literal opposition of description and dialogue, incident and description, has little meaning and light. People often talk of these things as if they had a kind of inter-necine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath and being intimately associated parts of one general effort of expression. I cannot imagine composition existing in a series of blocks, nor conceive, in any novel worth discussing at all, of a passage of description that is not in its intention narrative, a passage of dialogue that is not in its intention descriptive, a touch of truth of any sort that does not partake of the nature of incident, and an incident that derives its interest from any other source than the general and only source of the success of a work of art—that of being illustrative. A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like every other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts. The critic who over the close texture of a finished work will pretend to trace a geography of items will mark some frontiers as artificial, I fear, as any that have been known to history. There is an old-fashioned distinction between the novel of character and the novel of incident, which must have cost many a smile to the intending

romancer who was keen about his work. It appears to me as little to the point as the equally celebrated distinction between the novel and the romance—to answer as little to any reality. There are bad novels and good novels, as there are bad pictures and good pictures; but that is the only distinction in which I see any meaning, and I can as little imagine speaking of a novel of character as I can imagine speaking of a picture of character. When one says picture, one says of character, when one says novel, one says of incident, and the terms may be transposed. What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character? What is a picture or a novel that is *not* of character? What else do we seek in it and find in it? It is an incident for a woman to stand up with her hand resting on a table and look out at you in a certain way; or if it be not an incident, I think it will be hard to say what it is. At the same time it is an expression of character. If you say you don't see it (character in *that—allons donc!*) this is exactly what the artist who has reasons of his own for thinking he *does* see it undertakes to show you. When a young man makes up his mind that he has not faith enough, after all, to enter the Church, as he intended, that is an incident, though you may not hurry to the end of the chapter to see whether perhaps he doesn't change once more. I do not say that these are extraordinary or startling incidents. I do not pretend to estimate the degree of interest proceeding from them, for this will depend upon the skill of the painter. It sounds almost puerile to say that some incidents are intrinsically much more important than others, and I need not take this precaution after having professed my sympathy for the major ones in remarking that the only classification of the novel that I can understand is into the interesting and the uninteresting.

The novel and the romance, the novel of incident and that of character—these separations appear to me to have been made by critics and readers for their own convenience, and to help them out of some of their difficulties, but to have little reality or interest for the producer, from whose point of view it is, of course, that we are attempting to consider the art of fiction. The case is the same with another shadowy category, which Mr. Besant apparently is disposed to set up—that of the 'modern English novel'; unless, indeed, it be that in this matter he has fallen into an accidental confusion of standpoints. It is not quite clear whether he intends the remarks in which he alludes to it to be didactic or historical. It is as difficult to suppose a person in-

tending to write a modern English, as to suppose him writing an ancient English, novel; that is a label which begs the question. One writes the novel, one paints the picture, of one's language and of one's time, and calling it modern English will not, alas! make the difficult task any easier. No more, unfortunately, will calling this or that work of one's fellow artist a romance—unless it be, of course, simply for the pleasantness of the thing, as, for instance, when Hawthorne gave this heading to his story of Blithedale. The French, who have brought the theory of fiction to remarkable completeness, have but one word for the novel, and have not attempted smaller things in it, that I can see, for that. I can think of no obligation to which the 'romancer' would not be held equally with the novelist; the standard of execution is equally high for each. Of course it is of execution that we are talking—that being the only point of a novel that is open to contention. This is perhaps too often lost sight of, only to produce interminable confusions and cross-purposes. We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, what the French call his *donnée*; our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it. Naturally I do not mean that we are bound to like it or find it interesting: in case we do not our course is perfectly simple—to let it alone. We may believe that of a certain idea even the most sincere novelist can make nothing at all, and the event may perfectly justify our belief; but the failure will have been a failure to execute, and it is in the execution that the fatal weakness is recorded. If we pretend to respect the artist at all we must allow him his freedom of choice, in the face, in particular cases, of innumerable presumptions that the choice will not fructify. Art derives a considerable part of its beneficial exercise from flying in the face of presumptions, and some of the most interesting experiments of which it is capable are hidden in the bosom of common things. Gustave Flaubert has written a story about the devotion of a servant-girl to a parrot, and the production, highly finished as it is, cannot on the whole be called a success. We are perfectly free to find it flat, but I think it might have been interesting; and I, for my part, am extremely glad he should have written it; it is a contribution to our knowledge of what can be done—or what cannot. Ivan Turgénieff has written a tale about a deaf and dumb serf and a lap-dog, and the thing is touching, loving, a little masterpiece. He struck the note of life where Gustave Flaubert missed it—he flew in the face of a presumption and achieved a victory.

Nothing, of course, will ever take the place of the good old fashion of 'liking' a work of art or not liking it; the more improved criticism will not abolish that primitive, that ultimate, test. I mention this to guard myself from the accusation of intimating that the idea, the subject, of a novel or a picture, does not matter. It matters, to my sense, in the highest degree, and if I might put up a prayer it would be that artists should select none but the richest. Some, as I have already hastened to admit, are much more substantial than others, and it would be a happily arranged world in which persons intending to treat them should be exempt from confusions and mistakes. This fortunate condition will arrive only, I fear, on the same day that critics become purged from error. Meanwhile, I repeat, we do not judge the artist with fairness unless we say to him, 'Oh, I grant you your starting-point, because if I did not I should seem to prescribe to you, and heaven forbid I should take that responsibility. If I pretend to tell you what you must not take, you will call upon me to tell you then what you must take; in which case I shall be nicely caught! Moreover, it isn't till I have accepted your data that I can begin to measure you. I have the standard; I judge you by what you propose, and you must look out for me there. Of course I may not care for your idea at all; I may think it silly, or stale, or unclean; in which case I wash my hands of you altogether. I may content myself with believing that you will not have succeeded in being interesting, but I shall of course not attempt to demonstrate it, and you will be as indifferent to me as I am to you. I needn't remind you that there are all sorts of tastes: who can know it better? Some people, for excellent reasons, don't like to read about carpenters; others, for reasons even better, don't like to read about courtesans. Many object to Americans. Others (I believe they are mainly editors and publishers) won't look at Italians. Some readers don't like quiet subjects; others don't like bustling ones. Some enjoy a complete illusion; others revel in a complete deception. They choose their novels accordingly, and if they don't care about your idea they won't, *a fortiori*, care about your treatment.'

So that it comes back very quickly, as I have said, to the liking; in spite of M. Zola, who reasons less powerfully than he represents, and who will not reconcile himself to this absoluteness of taste, thinking that there are certain things that people ought to like, and that they can be made to like. I am quite at a loss to imagine anything (at any rate in this matter of fiction) that

people *ought* to like or to dislike. Selection will be sure to take care of itself, for it has a constant motive behind it. That motive is simply experience. As people feel life, so they will feel the art that is most closely related to it. This closeness of relation is what we should never forget in talking of the effort of the novel. Many people speak of it as a factitious, artificial form, a product of ingenuity, the business of which is to alter and arrange the things that surround us, to translate them into conventional, traditional moulds. This, however, is a view of the matter which carries us but a very short way, condemns the art to an eternal repetition of a few familiar *clichés*, cuts short its development, and leads us straight up to a dead wall. Catching the very note and trick, the strange irregular rhythm of life, that is the attempt whose strenuous force keeps Fiction upon her feet. In proportion as in what she offers us we see life *without* rearrangement do we feel that we are touching the truth; in proportion as we see it *with* rearrangement do we feel that we are being put off with a substitute, a compromise and convention. It is not uncommon to hear an extraordinary assurance of remark in regard to this matter of rearranging, which is often spoken of as if it were the last word of art. Mr. Besant seems to me in danger of falling into this great error with his rather unguarded talk about 'selection.' Art is essentially selection, but it is a selection whose main care is to be typical, to be inclusive. For many people art means rose-coloured windows, and selection means picking a bouquet for Mrs. Grundy. They will tell you glibly that artistic considerations have nothing to do with the disagreeable, with the ugly; they will rattle off shallow commonplaces about the province of art and the limits of art, till you are moved to some wonder in return as to the province and the limits of ignorance. It appears to me that no one can ever have made a seriously artistic attempt without becoming conscious of an immense increase—a kind of revelation—of freedom. One perceives, in that case—by the light of a heavenly ray—that the province of art is all life, all feeling, all observation, all vision. As Mr. Besant so justly intimates, it is all experience. That is a sufficient answer to those who maintain that it must not touch the painful, who stick into its divine unconscious bosom little prohibitory inscriptions on the end of sticks, such as we see in public gardens—'It is forbidden to walk on the grass; it is forbidden to touch the flowers; it is not allowed to introduce dogs, or to remain after dark; it is requested to keep to the right.' The young aspirant in the line of fiction,



whom we continue to imagine, will do nothing without taste, for in that case his freedom would be of little use to him; but the first advantage of his taste will be to reveal to him the absurdity of the little sticks and tickets. If he have taste, I must add, of course he will have ingenuity, and my disrespectful reference to that quality just now was not meant to imply that it is useless in fiction. But it is only a secondary aid; the first is a vivid sense of reality.

Mr. Besant has some remarks on the question of 'the story,' which I shall not attempt to criticise, though they seem to me to contain a singular ambiguity, because I do not think I understand them. I cannot see what is meant by talking as if there were a part of a novel which is the story and part of it which for mystical reasons is not—unless indeed the distinction be made in a sense in which it is difficult to suppose that anyone should attempt to convey anything. 'The story,' if it represents anything, represents the subject, the idea, the data of the novel; and there is surely no 'school'—Mr. Besant speaks of a school—which urges that a novel should be all treatment and no subject. There must assuredly be something to treat; every school is intimately conscious of that. This sense of the story being the idea, the starting-point, of the novel is the only one that I see in which it can be spoken of as something different from its organic whole; and since, in proportion as the work is successful, the idea permeates and penetrates it, informs and animates it, so that every word and every punctuation-point contribute directly to the expression, in that proportion do we lose our sense of the story being a blade which may be drawn more or less out of its sheath. The story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommended the use of the thread without the needle or the needle without the thread. Mr. Besant is not the only critic who may be observed to have spoken as if there were certain things in life which constitute stories and certain others which do not. I find the same odd implication in an entertaining article in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, devoted, as it happens, to Mr. Besant's lecture. 'The story is the thing!' says this graceful writer, as if with a tone of opposition to another idea. I should think it was, as every painter who, as the time for 'sending in' his picture looms in the distance, finds himself still in quest of a subject—as every belated artist, not fixed about his *donnée*, will heartily agree. There are some subjects which speak to us and others which do not, but he

would be a clever man who should undertake to give a rule by which the story and the no-story should be known apart. It is impossible (to me at least) to imagine any such rule which shall not be altogether arbitrary. The writer in the *Pall Mall* opposes the delightful (as I suppose) novel of 'Margot la Balafrée' to certain tales in which 'Bostonian nymphs' appear to have 'rejected English dukes for psychological reasons.' I am not acquainted with the romance just designated, and can scarcely forgive the *Pall Mall* critic for not mentioning the name of the author, but the title appears to refer to a lady who may have received a scar in some heroic adventure. I am inconsolable at not being acquainted with this episode, but am utterly at a loss to see why it is a story when the rejection (or acceptance) of a duke is not, and why a reason, psychological or other, is not a subject when a cicatrix is. They are all particles of the multitudinous life with which the novel deals, and surely no dogma which pretends to make it lawful to touch the one and unlawful to touch the other will stand for a moment on its feet. It is the special picture that must stand or fall, according as it seems to possess truth or to lack it. Mr. Besant does not, to my sense, light up the subject by intimating that a story must, under penalty of not being a story, consist of 'adventures.' Why of adventures more than of green spectacles? He mentions a category of impossible things, and among them he places 'fiction without adventure.' Why without adventure, more than without matrimony, or celibacy, or parturition, or cholera, or hydropathy, or Jansenism? This seems to me to bring the novel back to the hapless little rôle of being an artificial, ingenious thing—bring it down from its large, free character of an immense and exquisite correspondence with life. And what *is* adventure, when it comes to that, and by what sign is the listening pupil to recognise it? It is an adventure—an immense one—for me to write this little article; and for a Bostonian nymph to reject an English duke is an adventure only less stirring, I should say, than for an English duke to be rejected by a Bostonian nymph. I see dramas within dramas in that, and innumerable points of view. A psychological reason is, to my imagination, an object adorably pictorial; to catch the tint of its complexion—I feel as if that idea might inspire one to Titianesque efforts. There are few things more exciting to me, in short, than a psychological reason, and yet, I protest, the novel seems to me the most magnificent form of art. I have just been reading, at the same time, the delightful story of 'Treasure Island,' by Mr. Robert Louis Stevenson, and the last

tale from M. Edmond de Goncourt, which is entitled 'Chérie.' One of these works treats of murders, mysteries, islands of dreadful renown, hairbreadth escapes, miraculous coincidences and buried doubloons. The other treats of a little French girl who lived in a fine house in Paris and died of wounded sensibility because no one would marry her. I call 'Treasure Island' delightful, because it appears to me to have succeeded wonderfully in what it attempts; and I venture to bestow no epithet upon 'Chérie,' which strikes me as having failed in what it attempts—that is, in tracing the development of the moral consciousness of a child. But one of these productions strikes me as exactly as much of a novel as the other, and as having a 'story' quite as much. The moral consciousness of a child is as much a part of life as the islands of the Spanish Main, and the one sort of geography seems to me to have those 'surprises' of which Mr. Besant speaks quite as much as the other. For myself (since it comes back in the last resort, as I say, to the preference of the individual), the picture of the child's experience has the advantage that I can at successive steps (an immense luxury, near to the 'sensual pleasure' of which Mr. Besant's critic in the *Pall Mall* speaks) say Yes or No, as it may be, to what the artist puts before me. I have been a child, but I have never been on a quest for a buried treasure, and it is a simple accident that with M. de Goncourt I should have for the most part to say No. With George Eliot, when she painted that country, I always said Yes.

The most interesting part of Mr. Besant's lecture is unfortunately the briefest passage—his very cursory allusion to the 'conscious moral purpose' of the novel. Here again it is not very clear whether he is recording a fact or laying down a principle; it is a great pity that in the latter case he should not have developed his idea. This branch of the subject is of immense importance, and Mr. Besant's few words point to considerations of the widest reach, not to be lightly disposed of. He will have treated the art of fiction but superficially who is not prepared to go every inch of the way that these considerations will carry him. It is for this reason that at the beginning of these remarks I was careful to notify the reader that my reflections on so large a theme have no pretension to be exhaustive. Like Mr. Besant, I have left the question of the morality of the novel till the last, and at the last I find I have used up my space. It is a question surrounded with difficulties, as witness the very first that meets us, in the form of a definite question, on the threshold. Vagueness, in such

a discussion, is fatal, and what is the meaning of your morality and your conscious moral purpose? Will you not define your terms and explain how (a novel being a picture) a picture can be either moral or immoral? You wish to paint a moral picture or carve a moral statue; will you not tell us how you would set about it? We are discussing the Art of Fiction; questions of art are questions (in the widest sense) of execution; questions of morality are quite another affair, and will you not let us see how it is that you find it so easy to mix them up? These things are so clear to Mr. Besant that he has deduced from them a law which he sees embodied in English Fiction and which is 'a truly admirable thing and a great cause for congratulation.' It is a great cause for congratulation, indeed, when such thorny problems become as smooth as silk. I may add that, in so far as Mr. Besant perceives that in point of fact English Fiction has addressed itself preponderantly to these delicate questions, he will appear to many people to have made a vain discovery. They will have been positively struck, on the contrary, with the moral timidity of the usual English novelist; with his (or with her) aversion to face the difficulties with which, on every side, the treatment of reality bristles. He is apt to be extremely shy (whereas the picture that Mr. Besant draws is a picture of boldness), and the sign of his work, for the most part, is a cautious silence on certain subjects. In the English novel (by which I mean the American as well), more than in any other, there is a traditional difference between that which people know and that which they agree to admit that they know, that which they see and that which they speak of, that which they feel to be a part of life and that which they allow to enter into literature. There is the great difference, in short, between what they talk of in conversation and what they talk of in print. The essence of moral energy is to survey the whole field, and I should directly reverse Mr. Besant's remark, and say not that the English novel has a purpose, but that it has a diffidence. To what degree a purpose in a work of art is a source of corruption I shall not attempt to inquire; the one that seems to me least dangerous is the purpose of making a perfect work. As for our novel, I may say, lastly, on this score, that, as we find it in England to-day, it strikes me as addressed in a large degree to 'young people,' and that this in itself constitutes a presumption that it will be rather shy. There are certain things which it is generally agreed not to discuss, not even to mention, before young people. That is very well, but the absence of discussion is not a

symptom of the moral passion. The purpose of the English novel—'a truly admirable thing, and a great cause for congratulation'—strikes me, therefore, as rather negative.

There is one point at which the moral sense and the artistic sense lie very near together; that is, in the light of the very obvious truth that the deepest quality of a work of art will always be the quality of the mind of the producer. In proportion as that mind is rich and noble will the novel, the picture, the statue, partake of the substance of beauty and truth. To be constituted of such elements is, to my vision, to have purpose enough. No good novel will ever proceed from a superficial mind; that seems to me an axiom which, for the artist in fiction, will cover all needful moral ground; if the youthful aspirant take it to heart it will illuminate for him many of the mysteries of 'purpose.' There are many other useful things that might be said to him, but I have come to the end of my article, and can only touch them as I pass. The critic in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, whom I have already quoted, draws attention to the danger, in speaking of the art of fiction, of generalizing. The danger that he has in mind is rather, I imagine, that of particularizing, for there are some comprehensive remarks which, in addition to those embodied in Mr. Besant's suggestive lecture, might, without fear of misleading him, be addressed to the ingenuous student. I should remind him first of the magnificence of the form that is open to him, which offers to sight so few restrictions and such innumerable opportunities. The other arts, in comparison, appear confined and hampered; the various conditions under which they are exercised are so rigid and definite. But the only condition that I can think of attaching to the composition of the novel is, as I have already said, that it be interesting. This freedom is a splendid privilege, and the first lesson of the young novelist is to learn to be worthy of it. 'Enjoy it as it deserves,' I should say to him; 'take possession of it, explore it to its utmost extent, reveal it, rejoice in it. All life belongs to you, and don't listen either to those who would shut you up into corners of it and tell you that it is only here and there that art inhabits, or to those who would persuade you that this heavenly messenger wings her way outside of life altogether, breathing a superfine air and turning away her head from the truth of things. There is no impression of life, no manner of seeing it and feeling it, to which the plan of the novelist may not offer a place; you have only to remember that talents so dissimilar as those of Alexandre Dumas and Jane



Austen, Charles Dickens and Gustave Flaubert, have worked in this field with equal glory. Don't think too much about optimism and pessimism; try and catch the colour of life itself. In France to-day we see a prodigious effort (that of Emile Zola, to whose solid and serious work no explorer of the capacity of the novel can allude without respect), we see an extraordinary effort vitiated by a spirit of pessimism on a narrow basis. M. Zola is magnificent, but he strikes an English reader as ignorant; he has an air of working in the dark; if he had as much light as energy his results would be of the highest value. As for the aberrations of a shallow optimism, the ground (of English fiction especially) is strewn with their brittle particles as with broken glass. If you must indulge in conclusions let them have the taste of a wide knowledge. Remember that your first duty is to be as complete as possible—to make as perfect a work. Be generous and delicate, and then, in the vulgar phrase, go in!'

HENRY JAMES.

## *A Blue Grass Penelope.*

### CHAPTER V.

THE two men kept their secret. Mr. Poindexter convinced Mrs. Tucker that the sale of Los Cuervos could not be effected until the notoriety of her husband's flight had been fairly forgotten, and she was forced to accept her fate. The sale of her diamonds, which seemed to her to have realised a singularly extravagant sum, enabled her to quietly reinstate the Pattersons in the *tienda* and to discharge in full her husband's liabilities to the *rancheros* and his humbler retainers.

Meanwhile the winter rains had ceased. It seemed to her as if the clouds had suddenly one night struck their white tents and stolen away, leaving the unvanquished sun to mount the vacant sky the next morning alone, and possess it thenceforward unchallenged. One afternoon she thought the long sad waste before her window had caught some tint of gayer colour from the sunset; a week later she found it a blazing landscape of poppies, broken here and there by blue lagoons of lupine, by pools of daisies, by banks of dog-roses, by broad outlying shores of dandelions that scattered their lavish gold to the foot of the hills, where the green billows of wild oats carried it on and upwards to the darker crest of pines. For two months she was dazzled and bewildered with colour. She had never before been face to face with this spendthrift Californian Flora, in her virgin wastefulness—her more than goddess-like prodigality. The teeming earth seemed to quicken and throb beneath her feet; the few circuits of a plough around the outlying *corral* were enough to call out a jungle growth of giant grain that almost hid the low walls of the *hacienda*. In this glorious fecundity of the earth, in this joyous renewal of life and colour, in this opulent youth and freshness of soil and sky it alone remained—the dead and sterile Past—left in the midst of buoyant rejuvenescence and resurrection, like an empty churchyard skull upturned on the springing turf. Its bronzed *adobe* walls mocked the green vine that embraced them, the crumbling dust of its courtyard remained ungerminating and unfruitful; to

the thousand stirring voices without, its dry lips alone remained mute, unresponsive and unchanged.

During this time Don José had become a frequent visitor at Los Cuervos, bringing with him at first his niece and sister in a stately precision of politeness that was not lost on the proud Blue Grass stranger. She returned their visit at Los Gatos, and there made the formal acquaintance of Don José's grandmother—a lady who still regarded the decrepit Concha as a giddy *muchacha*, and who herself glittered as with the phosphorescence of refined decay. Through this circumstance she learned that Don José was not yet fifty, and that his gravity of manner and sedateness was more the result of fastidious isolation and temperament than years. She could not tell why the information gave her a feeling of annoyance, but it caused her to regret the absence of Poindexter, and to wonder, also somewhat nervously, why he had lately avoided her presence. The thought that he might be doing so from a recollection of the inuendoes of Mrs. Patterson caused a little tremor of indignation in her pulses. 'As if——' but she did not finish the sentence even to herself, and her eyes filled with bitter tears.

Yet she had thought of the husband who had so cruelly wronged her less feverishly, less impatiently than before. For she thought she loved him now the more deeply, because, although she was not reconciled to his absence, it seemed to keep alive the memory of what he had been before his one wild act separated them. She had never seen the reflection of another woman's eyes in his; the past contained no haunting recollection of waning or alienated affection; she could meet him again, and, clasping her arms around him, awaken as if from a troubled dream without reproach or explanation. Her strong belief in this made her patient; she no longer sought to know the particulars of his flight, and never dreamed that her passive submission to his absence was partly due to a fear that something in his actual presence at that moment would have destroyed that belief for ever.

For this reason the delicate reticence of the people at Los Gatos, and their seclusion from the world which knew of her husband's fault, had made her encourage the visits of Don José, until from the instinct already alluded to she one day summoned Poindexter to Los Cuervos, on the day that Don José usually called. But to her surprise the two men met more or less awkwardly and coldly, and her tact as hostess was tried to the utmost to keep their evident antagonism from being too apparent. The effort to reconcile their mutual discontent, and some other feeling she did

quite understand, produced a nervous excitement which called the blood to her fair cheek and gave a dangerous brilliancy to her eyes—two circumstances not unnoticed nor unappreciated by her two guests. But instead of reuniting them, the prettier Mrs. Tucker became, the more distant and reserved grew the men, until Don José rose before his usual hour, and with more than usual ceremoniousness departed.

‘Then my business does not seem to be with *him*?’ said Poindexter, with quiet coolness, as Mrs. Tucker turned her somewhat mystified face towards him. Or have you anything to say to me about him in private?’

‘I am sure I don’t know what you both mean,’ she returned with a slight tremor of voice. ‘I had no idea you were not on good terms. I thought you were! It’s very awkward.’ Without coquetry and unconsciously she raised her blue eyes under her lids until the clear pupils coyly and softly hid themselves in the corners of the brown lashes, and added—‘You have both been so kind to me.’

‘Perhaps that is the reason,’ said Poindexter gravely. But Mrs. Tucker refused to accept the suggestion with equal gravity, and began to laugh. The laugh, which was at first frank, spontaneous, and almost child-like, was becoming hysterical and nervous as she went on, until it was suddenly checked by Poindexter.

‘I have had no difficulties with Don José Santierra,’ he said, somewhat coldly ignoring her hilarity, ‘but perhaps he is not inclined to be as polite to the friend of the husband as he is to the wife.’

‘Mr. Poindexter!’ said Mrs. Tucker quickly, her face becoming pale again.

‘I beg your pardon!’ said Poindexter, flushing; ‘but——’

‘You want to say,’ she interrupted coolly, ‘that you are not friends, I see. Is that the reason why you have avoided this house?’ she continued gently.

‘I thought I could be of more service to you elsewhere,’ he replied evasively. ‘I have been lately following up a certain clue rather closely. I think I am on the track of a confidante of—of—that woman.’

A quick shadow passed over Mrs. Tucker’s face. ‘Indeed!’ she said coldly. ‘Then I am to believe that you prefer to spend your leisure moments in looking after that creature than in calling here?’

Poindexter was stupefied. Was this the woman who only four

months ago was almost vindictively eager to pursue her husband's paramour? There could be but one answer to it—Don José! Four months ago he would have smiled compassionately at it from his cynical pre-eminence. Now he managed with difficulty to stifle the bitterness of his reply.

'If you do not wish the inquiry carried on,' he began, 'of course——'

'I? What does it matter to me?' she said coolly. 'Do as you please.'

Nevertheless, half an hour later, as he was leaving, she said, with a certain hesitating timidity, 'Do not leave me so much alone here—and let that woman go.'

This was not the only unlooked-for sequel to her innocent desire to propitiate her best friends. Don José did not call again upon his usual day, but in his place came Doña Clara, his younger sister. When Mrs. Tucker had politely asked after the absent Don José, Doña Clara wound her swarthy arms around the fair American's waist and replied, 'But why did you send for the *abogado* Poindexter when my brother called?'

'But Captain Poindexter calls as one of my friends,' said the amazed Mrs. Tucker. 'He is a gentleman, and has been a soldier and an officer,' she added with some warmth.

'Ah, yes—a soldier of the law, what you call an *oficial de policia*—a chief of *gendarmes*, my sister, but not a gentleman—a *camarero* to protect a lady.'

Mrs. Tucker would have uttered a hasty reply, but the perfect and good-natured simplicity of Doña Clara withheld her. Nevertheless she treated Don José with a certain reserve at their next meeting, until it brought the simple-minded Castilian so dangerously near the point of demanding an explanation which implied too much, that she was obliged to restore him temporarily to his old footing. Meantime she had a brilliant idea. She would write to Calhoun Weaver, whom she had avoided since that memorable day. She would say she wished to consult him. He would come to Los Cuervos; he might suggest something to lighten this weary waiting—at least she would show them all that she had still old friends. Yet she did not dream of returning to her Blue Grass home; her parents had died since she left: she shrank from the thought of dragging her ruined life before the hopeful youth of her girlhood's companions.

Mr. Calhoun Weaver arrived promptly, ostentatiously, oracularly, and cordially—but a little coarsely. He had—did she remember?—expected this from the first. Spencer had lost his head



through vanity, and had attempted too much. It required foresight and firmness, as he himself—who had lately made successful ‘combinations’ which she might perhaps have heard of—well knew. But Spencer had got the ‘big head.’ ‘As to that woman—a devilish handsome woman too!—well, everybody knew that Spencer always had a weakness that way—and he would say—but if she didn’t care to hear any more about her, well, perhaps she was right. That was the best way to take it.’ Sitting before her, prosperous, weak, egotistical, incompetent, unavailable, and yet filled with a vague kindliness of intent, Mrs. Tucker loathed him. A sickening perception of her own weakness in sending for him, a new and aching sense of her utter isolation and helplessness, seemed to paralyse her.

‘Nat’rally you feel bad,’ he continued, with the large air of a profound student of human nature. ‘Nat’rally, nat’rally you’re kept in an uncomfortable state, not knowing jist how you stand. There ain’t but one thing to do. Jist rise up, quiet like, and get a divorce agin Spencer. Hold on! There ain’t a judge or jury in California that wouldn’t give it to you right off the nail, without asking questions. Why, you’d get it by default if you wanted to—you’d just have to walk over the course! And then, Belle’—he drew his chair nearer her—‘when you’ve settled down again—well!—I don’t mind renewing that offer I once made ye, before Spencer ever came round ye—I don’t mind, Belle, I swear I don’t! Honest Injin! I’m in earnest, there’s my hand!’

Mrs. Tucker’s reply has not been recorded. Enough that half an hour later Mr. Weaver appeared in the courtyard with traces of tears on his foolish face, a broken falsetto voice, and other evidence of mental and moral disturbance. His cordiality and oracular predisposition remained sufficiently to enable him to suggest the magical words ‘Blue Grass’ mysteriously to Concha, with an indication of his hand to the erect figure of her pale mistress in the doorway, who waved to him a silent but half-compassionate farewell.

At about this time a slight change in her manner was noticed by the few who saw her more frequently. Her apparently invincible girlishness of spirit had given way to a certain matronly seriousness. She applied herself to her household cares and the improvement of the *hacienda* with a new sense of duty and a settled earnestness, until by degrees she wrought into it not only her instinctive delicacy and taste, but part of her own individuality. Even the rude *rancheros* and tradesmen who were permitted to enter the walls

in the exercise of their calling began to speak mysteriously of the beauty of this garden of the *almarjal*. She went out but seldom, and then accompanied by the one or the other of her female servants, in long drives on unfrequented roads. On Sundays she sometimes drove to the half-ruined mission church of Santa Inez, and hid herself, during Mass, in the dim monastic shadows of the choir. Gradually the poorer people whom she met in these journeys began to show an almost devotional reverence for her, stopping in the roads with uncovered heads for her to pass, or making way for her in the *tienda* or *plaza* of the wretched town with dumb courtesy. She began to feel a strange sense of widowhood, that, while it at times brought tears to her eyes, was not without a certain tender solace. In the sympathy and simpleness of this impulse she went as far as to revive the mourning she had worn for her parents, but with such a fatal accenting of her beauty, and dangerous misinterpreting of her condition to eligible bachelors strange to the country, that she was obliged to put it off again. Her reserve and dignified manner caused others to mistake her nationality for that of the Santierras, and in 'Doña Bella' the simple Mrs. Tucker was for a while forgotten. At times she even forgot it herself. Accustomed now almost entirely to the accents of another language and the features of another race, she would sit for hours in the corridor, whose massive bronzed inclosure even her tasteful care could only make an embowered mausoleum of the Past, or gaze abstractedly from the dark embrasures of her windows across the stretching *almarjal* to the shining lagoon beyond that terminated the estuary. She had a strange fondness for this tranquil mirror, which under sun or stars always retained the passive reflex of the sky above and seemed to rest her weary eyes. She had objected to one of the plans projected by Poindexter to redeem the land and deepen the water at the *embarcadero*, as it would have drained the lagoon, and the lawyer had postponed the improvement to gratify her fancy. So she kept it through the long summer unchanged save by the shadows of passing wings or the lazy files of sleeping sea-fowl.

On one of these afternoons she noticed a slowly moving carriage leave the high road and cross the *almarjal* skirting the edge of the lagoon. If it contained visitors for Los Cuervos they had evidently taken a shorter cut without waiting to go on to the regular road which intersected the highway at right angles a mile farther on. It was with some sense of annoyance and irritation that she watched the trespass, and finally saw the vehicle

approach the house. A few moments later the servant informed her that Mr. Patterson would like to see her alone. When she entered the corridor, which in the dry season served as a reception hall, she was surprised to see that Mr. Patterson was not alone. Near him stood a well-dressed handsome woman, gazing about her with good-humoured admiration of Mrs. Tucker's taste and ingenuity.

'It don't look much like it did two years ago,' said the stranger cheerfully. 'You've improved it wonderfully.'

Stiffening slightly, Mrs. Tucker turned inquiringly to Mr. Patterson. But that gentleman's usual profound melancholy appeared to be intensified by the hilarity of his companion. He only sighed deeply and rubbed his leg with the brim of his hat in gloomy abstraction.

'Well!—go on, then,' said the woman, laughing and nudging him. 'Go on—introduce me—can't you? Don't stand there like a tombstone. You won't? Well, I'll introduce myself.' She laughed again, and then, with an excellent imitation of Patterson's lugubrious accents, said, 'Mr. Spencer Tucker's wife that *is*—allow me to introduce you to Mr. Spencer Tucker's sweetheart that *was*! Hold on! I said *that was*. For true as I stand here, ma'am—and I reckon I wouldn't stand here if it wasn't true—I haven't set eyes on him since the day he left you.'

'It's the Gospel truth, every word,' said Patterson, stirred into a sudden activity by Mrs. Tucker's white and rigid face. 'It's the frozen truth, and I kin prove it. For I kin swear that when that there young woman was sailin' outer the Golden Gate, Spencer Tucker was in my bar room; I kin swear that I fed him, lickored him, give him a hoss and set him in his road to Monterey that very night.'

'Then where is he now?' said Mrs. Tucker, suddenly facing them.

They looked at each other and then looked at Mrs. Tucker. Then both together replied slowly and in perfect unison, 'That's—what—we—want—to—know.' They seemed so satisfied with this effect that they as deliberately repeated, 'Yes—that's—what—we—want—to—know.'

Between the shock of meeting the partner of her husband's guilt and the unexpected revelation to her inexperience, that in suggestion and appearance there was nothing beyond the recollection of that guilt that was really shocking in the woman—between the extravagant extremes of hope and fear suggested by their

words, there was something so grotesquely absurd in the melodramatic chorus that she with difficulty suppressed a hysterical laugh.

'That's the way to take it,' said the woman, putting her own good-humoured interpretation upon Mrs. Tucker's expression. 'Now look here! I'll tell you all about it.' She carefully selected the most comfortable chair, and sitting down, lightly crossed her hands in her lap. 'Well, I left here on the 13th of last January on the ship *Argo*, calculating that your husband would join the ship just inside the Heads. That was our arrangement, but if anything happened to prevent him, he was to join me in Acapulco. Well! He didn't come aboard, and we sailed without him. But it appears now he did attempt to join the ship, but his boat was capsized. There now—don't be alarmed! he wasn't drowned, as Patterson can swear to—no, catch *him*! not a hair of him was hurt—but *I—I* was bundled off to the end of the earth in Mexico, alone, without a cent to bless me. For true as you live, that hound of a captain, when he found, as he thought, that Spencer was nabbed, he just confiscated all his trunks and valuables and left me in the lurch. If I hadn't met a man down there that offered to marry me and brought me here, I might have died there, I reckon. But I did, and here I am. I went down there as your husband's sweetheart, I've come back as the wife of an honest man, and I reckon it's about square!'

There was something so startlingly frank, so hopelessly self-satisfied, so contagiously good-humoured in the woman's perfect moral unconsciousness, that even if Mrs. Tucker had been less preoccupied her resentment would have abated. But her eyes were fixed on the gloomy face of Patterson, who was beginning to unlock the sepulchres of his memory and disinter his deeply buried thoughts.

'You kin bet your whole pile on what this Mrs. Capting Baxter—ez used to be French Inez of New Orleans—hez told ye. Ye kin take everything she's onloaded. And it's only doin' the square thing to her to say, she hain't done it out o' no cussedness, but just to satisfy herself, now she's a married woman and past such foolishness. But that ain't neither here nor there. The gist of the whole matter is that Spencer Tucker was at the *tienda* the day after she sailed and after his boat capsized.' He then gave a detailed account of the interview, with the unnecessary but truthful minutiae of his class, adding to the particulars already known that the following week he visited the Summit House and

was surprised to find that Spencer had never been there, nor had he ever sailed from Monterey.

'But why was this not told to me before?' said Mrs. Tucker, suddenly. 'Why not at the time? Why,' she demanded almost fiercely, turning from the one to the other, 'has this been kept from me?'

'I'll tell ye why,' said Patterson, sinking with crushed submission into a chair. 'When I found he wasn't where he ought to be, I got to lookin' elsewhere. I knew the track of the hoss I lent him by a loose shoe. I examined, and found he had turned off the high road somewhere beyond the lagoon, jist as if he was makin' a bee line here.'

'Well,' said Mrs. Tucker, breathlessly.

'Well,' said Patterson, with the resigned tone of an accustomed martyr, 'mebbe I'm a God-forsaken idiot, but I reckon he *did* come yer. And mebbe I'm that much of a habitooal lunatic, but thinking so, I calkilated you'd know it without tellin'.'

With their eyes fixed upon her, Mrs. Tucker felt the quick blood rush to her cheeks, although she knew not why. But they were apparently satisfied with her ignorance, for Patterson resumed, yet more gloomily:—

'Then if he wasn't hidin' here bekownst to you, he must have changed his mind agin and got away by the *embarcadero*. The only thing wantin' to prove that idea is to know how he got a boat, and what he did with the hoss. And thar's one more idea, and ez that can't be proved,' continued Patterson, sinking his voice still lower, 'mebbe it's accordin' to God's laws.'

Unsympathetic to her as the speaker had always been and still was, Mrs. Tucker felt a vague chill creep over her that seemed to be the result of his manner more than his words. 'And that idea is . . . ?' she suggested with pale lips.

'It's this! Fust, I don't say it means much to anybody but me. I've heard of these warnings afore now, ez comin' only to folks ez hear them for themselves alone, and I reckon I kin stand it, if it's the will o' God. The idea is then—that—Spencer Tucker—*was drowned* in that boat—the idea is'—his voice was almost lost in a hoarse whisper—'that it was no living man that kem to me that night, but a spirit that kem out of the darkness and went back into it! No eye saw him but mine—no ears heard him but mine. I reckon it weren't intended it should.' He paused, and passed the flap of his hat across his eyes. 'The pie, you'll say, is agin it,' he continued in the same tone of voice—'the whisky is agin it



—a few cuss words that dropped from him, accidental like, may have been agin it. All the same they mout have been only the little signs and tokens that it was him.'

But Mrs. Baxter's ready laugh somewhat rudely dispelled the infection of Patterson's gloom. 'I reckon the only spirit was that which you and Spencer consumed,' she said cheerfully. 'I don't wonder you're a little mixed. Like as not you've misunderstood his plans.' Patterson shook his head. 'He'll turn up yet, alive and kicking! Like as not, then, Poindexter knows where he is all the time.'

'Impossible! He would have told me,' said Mrs. Tucker, quickly.

Mrs. Baxter looked at Patterson without speaking. Patterson replied by a long lugubrious whistle.

'I don't understand you,' said Mrs. Tucker, drawing back with cold dignity.

'You don't?' returned Mrs. Baxter. 'Bless your innocent heart! Why was he so keen to hunt me up at first, shadowing my friends and all that, and why has he dropped it now he knows I'm here, if he didn't know where Spencer was?'

'I can explain that,' interrupted Mrs. Tucker, hastily, with a blush of confusion. 'That is—I——'

'Then mebbe you kin explain too,' broke in Patterson with gloomy significance, 'why he has bought up most of Spencer's debts himself, and perhaps you're satisfied it *isn't* to hold the whip hand of him and keep him from coming back openly. Pr'aps you know why he's movin' heaven and earth to make Don José Santierra sell the ranch, and why the Don don't see it at all.'

'Don José sell Los Cuervos! Buy it, you mean?' said Mrs. Tucker. 'I offered to sell it to him.'

Patterson arose from the chair, looked despairingly around him, passed his hand sadly across his forehead, and said: 'It's come! I knew it would. It's the warning! It's suthing be-twixt jim-jams and doddering idjiocy. Here I'd hev been willin' to swear that Mrs. Baxter here told me *she* had sold this yer ranch nearly two years ago to Don José, and now you——'

'Stop!' said Mrs. Tucker, in a voice that chilled them.

She was standing upright and rigid, as if stricken to stone. 'I command you to tell me what this means!' she said, turning only her blazing eyes upon the woman.

Even the ready smile faded from Mrs. Baxter's lips as she

replied hesitatingly and submissively: 'I thought you knew already that Spencer had given this ranch to me. I sold it to Don José to get the money for us to go away with. It was Spencer's idea——'

'You lie!' said Mrs. Tucker.

There was a dead silence. The wrathful blood that had quickly mounted to Mrs. Baxter's cheek, to Patterson's additional bewilderment, faded as quickly. She did not lift her eyes again to Mrs. Tucker's, but, slowly raising herself from her seat, said, 'I wish to God I did lie; but it's true. And it's true that I never touched a cent of the money, but gave it all to him!' She laid her hand on Patterson's arm, and said, 'Come! let us go,' and led him a few steps towards the gateway. But here Patterson paused, and again passed his hand over his melancholy brow. The necessity of coherently and logically closing the conversation impressed itself upon his darkening mind. 'Then you don't happen to have heard anything of Spencer?' he said sadly, and vanished with Mrs. Baxter through the gate.

Left alone to herself, Mrs. Tucker raised her hands above her head with a little cry, interlocked her rigid fingers, and slowly brought her palms down upon her upturned face and eyes, pressing hard as if to crush out all light and sense of life before her. She stood thus for a moment motionless and silent, with the rising wind whispering without and flecking her white morning dress with gusty shadows from the arbour. Then, with closed eyes, dropping her hands to her breast, still pressing hard, she slowly passed them down the shapely contours of her figure to the waist, and with another cry cast them off as if she were stripping herself of some loathsome garment. Then she walked quickly to the gateway, looked out, returned to the corridor, unloosening and taking off her wedding-ring from her finger as she walked. Here she paused, then slowly and deliberately rearranged the chairs and adjusted the gay-coloured rugs that draped them and quietly re-entered her chamber.

Two days afterwards the sweating steed of Captain Poindexter was turned loose in the corral, and a moment later the captain entered the corridor. Handing a letter to the decrepit Concha, who seemed to be utterly disorganised by its contents, and the few curt words with which it was delivered, he gazed silently upon the vacant bower, still fresh and redolent with the delicacy and perfume of its graceful occupant, until his dark eyes filled with

unaccustomed moisture. But his reverie was interrupted by the sound of jingling spurs without, and the old humour struggled back in his eyes as Don José impetuously entered. The Spaniard started back, but instantly recovered himself.

‘So, I find you here. Ah!—it is well!’ he said passionately, producing a letter from his bosom. Look! Do you call this honour? Look how you keep your compact!’

Poindexter coolly took the letter. It contained a few words of gentle dignity from Mrs. Tucker, informing Don José that she had only that instant learned of his just claims upon Los Cuervos, tendering him her gratitude for his delicate intentions, but pointing out with respectful firmness that he must know that a moment’s further acceptance of his courtesy was impossible.

‘She has gained this knowledge from no word of mine,’ said Poindexter calmly. ‘Right or wrong, I have kept my promise to you. I have as much reason to accuse you of betraying my secret in this,’ he added coldly, as he took another letter from his pocket and handed it to Don José.

It seemed briefer and colder, but was neither. It reminded Poindexter that as he had again deceived her she must take the government of her affairs in her own hands henceforth. She abandoned all the furniture and improvements she had put in Los Cuervos to him, to whom she now knew she was indebted for them. She could not thank him for what his habitual generosity impelled him to do for any woman, but she could forgive him for misunderstanding her like any other woman—perhaps she should say, like a child. When he received this she would be already on her way to her old home in Kentucky, where she still hoped to be able by her own efforts to amass enough to discharge her obligations to him.

‘She does not speak of her husband—this woman,’ said Don José, scanning Poindexter’s face. ‘It is possible she rejoins him, eh?’

‘Perhaps in one way she has never left him, Don José,’ said Poindexter, with grave significance.

Don José’s face flushed, but he returned carelessly, ‘And the *ranch*—naturally you will not buy it now?’

‘On the contrary, I shall abide by my offer,’ said Poindexter, quietly.

Don José eyed him narrowly, and then said, ‘Ah, we shall consider of it.’

He did consider it, and accepted the offer. With the full

control of the land, Captain Poindexter's improvements, so indefinitely postponed, were actively pushed forward. The thick walls of the *hacienda* were the first to melt away before them; the low lines of corral were effaced, and the early breath of the summer trade winds swept uninterruptedly across the now levelled plain to the *embarcadero*, where a newer structure arose. A more vivid green alone marked the spot where the crumbling *adobe* walls of the *casa* had returned to the parent soil that gave it. The channel was deepened, the lagoon was drained, until one evening the magic mirror that had so long reflected the weary waiting of the Blue Grass Penelope lay dull, dead, lustreless—an opaque quagmire of noisome corruption and decay to be put away from the sight of man for ever. On this spot the crows—the titular tenants of Los Cuervos—assembled in tumultuous congress, coming and going in mysterious clouds, or labouring in thick and writhing masses, as if they were continuing the work of improvement begun by human agency. So well had they done that work that by the end of a week only a few scattered white objects remained glittering on the surface of the quickly drying soil. But they were the bones of the missing outcast, Spencer Tucker!

The same spring a breath of war swept over a foul, decaying quagmire of the whole land, before which such passing deeds as these were blown as vapour. It called men of all rank and condition to battle for a nation's life, and among the first to respond were those into whose boyish hands had been placed the nation's honour. It returned the epaulets to Poindexter's shoulder with the addition of a double star, carried him triumphantly to the front, and left him, at the end of a summer's day and a hard-won fight, sorely wounded, at the door of a Blue Grass farmhouse. And the woman who sought him out and ministered to his wants said timidly as she left her hand in his, 'I told you I should live to repay you.'

BRET HARTE.

*The End.*

### *In September.*

THIS windy bright September afternoon,  
 My heart is wide awake, yet full of dreams.  
 The air, alive with hushed confusion, teems  
 With scent of grainfields, and a mystic rune,  
 Foreboding of the fall of summer soon,  
 Keeps swelling and subsiding ; till there seems  
 O'er all the world of valleys, hills, and streams,  
 Only the wind's inexplicable tune.

My heart is full of dreams, yet wide awake.  
 I lie and watch the topmost tossing boughs  
 Of tall elms, pale against the vaulted blue ;  
 But even now some yellowing branches shake,  
 Some hue of death the living green endows :—  
 If beauty flies, fain would I vanish too !

C. D. ROBERTS.



## *Madam.*

BY MRS. OLIPHANT.

### CHAPTER XL.

TOWARDS the end of the summer, during the height of which Mrs. Lennox's party had returned to the Italian lakes, one of the friends she made at Cadenabbia represented to that good woman that her rheumatism, from which she had suffered during the winter, though perhaps not quite so severely as she imagined, made it absolutely necessary for her to go through a 'cure' at Aix-les-Bains, where, as everybody knows, rheumatism is miraculously operated upon by the waters. Aunt Sophy was very much excited by this piece of advice. In the company which she had been frequenting of late, at the *tables d'hôte* and in the public promenades, she had begun to perceive that it was scarcely respectable for a person of a certain age not to go through a yearly 'cure' at some one or other of a number of watering-places. It indicated a state of undignified health and robustness which was not quite nice for a lady no longer young. There were many who went to Germany, to the different *bads* there, and a considerable number whose 'cure' was in France, and some even who sought unknown springs in Switzerland and Italy; but, taken on the whole, very few indeed were the persons over fifty of either sex who did not reckon a 'cure,' occupying three weeks or so of the summer or autumn, as a necessary part of the routine of life. To all Continental people it was indispensable, and there were many Americans who crossed the ocean for this purpose, going to Carlsbad or to Kissingen or somewhere else with as much regularity as if they had lived within a railway journey of the place. Only the English were careless on so important a subject, but even among them many become convinced of the necessity day by day.

Mrs. Lennox, when this idea fully penetrated her mind, and she had blushed to think how far she was behind in so essential

a particular of life, had a strong desire to go to Homburg, where all the 'best people' went, and where there was quite a little supplementary London season, after the conclusion of the genuine article. But, unfortunately, there was nothing the matter with her digestion. Her rheumatism was the only thing she could bring forward as entitling her to any position at all among the elderly ladies and gentlemen who in August were setting out for, or returning from, their 'cures.' 'Oh, then, of course, it is Aix you must go to,' her informants said; 'it is a little late, perhaps, in September—most of the best people will have gone—still, you know the waters are just as good, and the great heat is over. You could not do better than Aix.' One of the ladies who thus instructed her was even kind enough to suggest the best hotel to go to, and to proffer her own services, as knowing all about it, to write and secure rooms for her friend. 'It is a pity you did not go three weeks ago, when all the best people were there; but, of course, the waters are just the same,' this benevolent person repeated. Mrs. Lennox became, after a time, very eager on this subject. She no longer blushed when her new acquaintances talked of their cure. She explained to new-comers, 'It is a little late, but it did not suit my arrangements before; and, of course, the waters are the same, though the best people are gone.' Besides, it was always, she said, on the way home, whatever might happen.

They set off accordingly, travelling in a leisurely way, in the beginning of September. Mrs. Lennox felt that it was expedient to go slowly, to have something of the air of an invalid before she began her 'cure.' Up to this moment she had borne a stray twinge of pain when it came, in her shoulder or her knee, and thought it best to say nothing about it; but now she made a little grimace when that occurred, and said, 'Oh, my shoulder!' or complained of being stiff when she got out of the carriage. It was only right that she should feel her ailments a little more than usual when she began her cure.

The hotels were beginning to empty when the English party, so helpless, so used to comfort, so inviting to everybody that wanted to make money out of them, appeared. They were received, it is needless to say, with open arms, and had the best suites of rooms to choose from. Mrs. Lennox felt herself to grow in importance from the moment she entered the place. She felt more stiff than ever when she got out of the carriage and was led upstairs, the anxious landlady suggesting that there was a

chair in which she could be carried to her apartment if the stairs were too much for her. 'Oh, I think I can manage to walk up if I am not hurried,' Aunt Sophy said. It would have been quite unkind, almost improper, not to adopt the *rôle* which suited the place. She went up quite slowly, holding by the banister, while the children, astonished, crowded up after her, wondering what had happened. 'I think I will take your arm, Rosalind,' murmured the simple woman. She did really feel much stiffer than usual; and then there was that pain in her shoulder. 'I am so glad I have suffered myself to be persuaded to come. I wonder Dr. Tennant did not order me here long ago; for I really think in my present condition I never should have been able to get home.' Even Rosalind was much affected by this suggestion, and blamed herself for never having discovered how lame Aunt Sophy was growing. 'But it is almost your own fault, for you never showed it,' she said. 'My dear, I did not, of course, want to make you anxious,' replied Mrs. Lennox.

The doctor came next morning, and everything was settled about the 'cure.' He told the new-comers that there were still a good many people in Aix, and that all the circumstances were most favourable. Mrs. Lennox was taken to her bath in a chair the day after, and went through all the operations which the medical man thought requisite. He spoke excellent English—which was such a comfort. He told his patient that the air of the place where the cure was to be effected often seemed to produce a temporary recrudescence of the disease. Aunt Sophy was much exhilarated by this word. She talked of this chance of a recrudescence in a soft and subdued tone, such as became her invalid condition, and felt a most notable increase of dignity and importance as she proceeded with her 'cure.'

Rosalind was one of the party who took least to this unexpected delay. She had begun to be very weary of the travelling, the monotony of the groups of new acquaintances all so like each other, the atmosphere of hotels, and all the vulgarities of a life in public. To the children it did not matter much; they took their walks all the same whether they were at the Elms or Aix-les-Bains, and had their nursery dinner at their usual hour, whatever happened. The absorption of Mrs. Lennox in her 'cure' threw Rosalind now entirely upon the society of these little persons. She went with them, or rather they went with her, in her constant expeditions to the lake, which attracted her more than the tiresome amusements of the watering-place, and thus all their

little adventures and encounters—incidents which in other circumstance might have been overlooked—became matters of importance to her.

It was perhaps because he was the only boy in the little feminine party, or because he was the youngest, that Johnny was invariably the principal personage in all these episodes of childish life. He it was whom the ladies admired, whom strangers stopped to talk to, who was the little hero of every small excitement. His beautiful eyes, the boyish boldness which contrasted so strongly with little Amy's painful shyness, and even with his own little pale face and unassured strength, captivated the passers-by. He was the favourite of the nursery, which was now presided over by a nurse much more enlightened than Russell, a woman recommended by the highest authorities, and who knew, or was supposed to know, nothing of the family history. Rosalind had heard vaguely without paying much attention of various admirers who had paid their tribute to the attractions of her little brother, but it was not until her curiosity was roused by the appearance of a present in the form of a handsome and expensive mechanical toy, the qualities of which Johnny expounded with much self-importance and in a loud voice, that she was moved to any remark. The children were on the floor near her, full of excitement. 'Now it shall run round and round, and now it shall go straight home,' Johnny said, while Amy watched and listened ecstatically, a little maiden of few words, whose chief qualities were a great power of admiration and a still greater of love.

Rosalind was seated musing by the window, a little tired, wondering when the 'cure' would be over, and if Aunt Sophy would then recover the use of her limbs again, and consent to go home. Mrs. Lennox was always good and kind, and the children were very dear to their mother-sister; but now and then, not always, perhaps not often, there comes to a young woman like Rosalind a longing for companionship such as neither aunts nor children can give. Neither the children nor her aunt shared her thoughts; they understood her very imperfectly on most occasions; they had love to give her, but not a great deal more. She sighed, as people do when there is something wanting to them, then turned upon herself with a kind of rage and asked, 'What did she want?' as girls will do on whom it has been impressed that this wish for companionship is a thing that is wrong, perhaps unmaidenly. But after all there was no harm in it. Oh, that Uncle John was here! she said to herself. Even Roland Hamerton would have been

something. He could have tried at least his very best to think as she did. Oh that——! She did not put any name to this aspiration. She was not very sure who—which—it meant, and then she breathed a still deeper sigh, and tears came to her eyes. Oh! for *her* of whom nobody knew where she was wandering or in what circumstances she might be. She heard the children's voices vaguely through her thinking and by-and-by a word caught her ear.

'The lady said I was to do it like this. She did it for me on the table out in the garden. It nearly felled down,' said Johnny, 'and then it would have broken itself, so she put it on the ground and went down on her knees.'

'Oh, what did she go on her knees for, like saying her prayers, Johnny?'

'Nothin' of the sort. She just went down like this and caught hold of me. I expose,' said Johnny, whose language was not always correct, 'she is stiff like Aunt Sophy; for I was far more stronger and kept her up.'

'Who is this that he is talking of, Amy?' Rosalind said.

The little girl gave her a look which had some meaning in it, Rosalind could not tell what, and, giving Johnny a little push with her arm after the easy method of childhood, said, 'Tell her,' turning away to examine the toy.

'It was the lady,' Johnny said, turning slightly round as on a pivot, and lifting to her those great eyes which Aunt Sophy had said were like—and which always went straight to Rosalind's heart.

'What lady, dear? and where did you get that beautiful toy?' Rosalind followed the description the child had been giving, and came and knelt on the carpet beside him. 'How pretty it is! Did Aunt Sophy give you that?'

'It was the lady,' Johnny repeated.

'What lady? Was it a stranger, Amy, that gave him such a beautiful toy?'

'I think, Miss Rosalind,' said the nurse, coming to the rescue, 'it is some lady that has lost her little boy, and that he must have been about Master Johnny's age. I said it was too much, and that you would not like him to take it; but she said the ladies would never mind if they knew it was for the sake of another—that she had lost.'

'Poor lady!' Rosalind said; the tears came to her eyes in sudden sympathy; 'that must be so sad, to lose a child.'

'It is the greatest sorrow in this world, to be only sorrow,' the woman said.



'Only sorrow! and what can be worse than that?' said innocent Rosalind. 'Is the lady very sad, Johnny? I hope you were good and thanked her for it. Perhaps if I were with him some day she would speak to me.'

'She doesn't want nobody but me,' said Johnny. 'Oh look! doesn't it go. It couldn't go on the ground because of the stones. Amy, Amy, get out of the way, it will run you over. And now it's going home to take William a message. I whispered in it, so it knows what to say.'

'But I want to hear about the lady, Johnny.'

'Oh look, look! its fallen on the carpet; it don't like the carpet any more than the stones. I expose it's on the floor it will go best, or on the grass. Nurse, come along, let's go out and try it on the grass.'

'Johnny, stop! I want to know more about this lady, dear.'

'Oh, there is nothing about her,' cried the little boy, rushing after his toy. Sophy, who had been practising, got up from the piano and came forward to volunteer information.

'She's an old fright,' said Sophy. 'I've seen her back—dressed all in mourning, with a thick veil on. She never took any notice of us others that have more sense than Johnny. I could have talked to her, but he can't talk to anybody, he is so little and so silly. All he can say is only stories he makes up; you think that is clever, but I don't think it is clever. If I was his—aunt,' said Sophy, with a momentary hesitation, 'I would whip him. For all that is lies, don't you know? You would say it was lies if I said it, but you think it's poetry because of Johnny. Poetry is lies, Rosalind, yes, and novels too. They're not true, so what can they be but lies? that's why I don't care to read them. No, I never read them, I like what's true.'

Rosalind caught her book instinctively, which was all she had left. 'We did not ask you for your opinion about poetry, Sophy; but if this lady is so kind to Johnny I should like to go and thank her. Next time you see her say that Johnny's sister would like to thank her. If she has lost her little boy we ought to be very sorry for her,' Rosalind said.

Sophy looked at her with an unmoved countenance. 'I think people are a great deal better off that are not bothered with children,' she said; 'I should send the little ones home, and then we could do what we liked, and stay as long as we liked,' quoth the little woman of the world.

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## CHAPTER XLI.

JOHNNY's little social successes were so frequent that the memory of the poor lady who had lost her child at his age soon died away, and the toy got broken and went the way of all toys. Their life was spent in a very simple round of occupations. Rosalind, whose powers as an artist were not beyond the gentlest level of amateur art, took to sketching, as a means of giving some interest to her idle hours, and it became one of the habits of the family that Aunt Sophy, when well enough to go out for her usual afternoon drive, should deposit her niece and the children on the bank of the lake, the spot which Rosalind had chosen as the subject of a sketch. The hills opposite shone in the afternoon sun with a grey haze of heat softening all their outlines; the water glowed and sparkled in all its various tones of blue, here and there specked by a slowly progressing boat, carrying visitors across to the mock antiquity of Hautecombe.

After the jingle and roll of Mrs. Lennox's carriage had passed away, the silence of the summer heat so stilled the landscape that the distant clank of the oars on the water produced the highest effect. It was very warm, yet there was something in the haze that spoke of autumn, and a cool but capricious little breeze came now and then from the water. Rosalind, sitting in the shade with her sketching-block upon her knee, felt that soft indolence steal over her, that perfect physical content and harmony with everything, which takes all impulse from the mind and makes the sweetness of doing nothing a property of the very atmosphere. Her sketch was very unsatisfactory for one thing: the subject was much too great for her simple powers. She knew just enough to know that it was bad, but not how to do what she wished, to carry out her own ideal. To make out the open secret before her, and perceive how it was that Nature formed those shadows and poured down that light, was possible to her mind but not to her hand, which had not the cunning necessary for the task; but she was clever enough to see her incapacity, which is more than can be said of most amateurs. Her hands had dropped by her side, and her sketch upon her lap. After all, who could hope to put upon paper those dazzling lights, and the differing tones of air and distance, the shadows that flitted over the mountain sides, the subdued radiance of the sky? Perhaps a great artist, Turner or his chosen rival, but not an untrained girl, whose gifts were only

for the drawing-room. Rosalind was not moved by any passion of regret on account of her failure. She was content to sit still and vaguely contemplate the beautiful scene, which was half within her and half without. The 'inward eye which is the bliss of solitude' filled out the outline of the picture for her as she sat, not thinking, a part of the silent rapture of the scene. The children were playing near her, and their voices, softened in the warm air, made part of the beatitude of the moment—that, and the splash of the water on the shore, and the distant sound of the oars, and the breeze that blew in her face. It was one of those exquisite instants, without any actual cause of happiness in them, when we are happy without knowing why. Such periods come back to the mind as the great events which are called joyful never do—for with events, however joyful, there come agitations, excitements—whereas pure happiness is serene, and all the sweeter for being without any cause.

Thus Rosalind sat—notwithstanding many things in her life which were far from perfect—in perfect calm and pleasure. The nurse, seated lower down upon the beach, was busy with a piece of work, crochet or some other of those useless handiworks which are a refreshment to those who are compelled to be useful for the greater portion of their lives. The children were still near to the edge of the water, playing with a little pleasure-boat which was moored within the soft splash of the lake. It was not a substantial craft like the boats native to the place, which are meant to convey passengers and do serious work, but was a little, gaily painted, pleasure skiff, belonging to an Englishman in the neighbourhood, neither safe nor solid—one of the cockleshells that a wrong balance upsets in a moment. It was to all appearance safely attached to something on the land, and suggested no idea of danger either to the elder sister seated above or to the nurse on the beach.

Amy and Johnny had exhausted their imagination in a hundred dramatic plays; they had 'pretended' to be kings and queens, to be a lady receiving visitors and a gentleman making a morning call, to be a clergyman preaching to a highly critical and unsatisfactory audience, which would neither stay quiet nor keep still, to be a procession chanting funeral hymns, even coming down sadly from that level of high art to keep a shop, selling pebbles and sand for tea and sugar. Such delights, however, are but transitory; the children after a while exhausted every device they could think of; and then they got into the boat, which it was

very easy to do. The next thing, as was natural, was to 'pretend' to push off and row. And, alas! the very first of these attempts was too successful. The boat had been attached, as it appeared, merely to a small iron rod thrust into the sand, and Johnny, being vigorous and pulling with all his little might—with so much might that he tumbled into the bottom of the boat head over heels in the revulsion of the effort—the hold gave way. Both nurse and sister sat tranquilly, fearing no evil, while this tremendous event took place, and it was not till the shifting of some bright lines in the foreground caught Rosalind's dreaming eye that the possibility of any accident occurred to her. She sprang to her feet then, with a loud cry which startled the nurse and a group of children playing further on, on the beach, but no one who could be of any real assistance. The little bright vessel was afloat and already bearing away upon the shining water. In a minute it was out of reach of anything the women could do. There was not a boat or a man within sight; the only hope was in the breeze which directed the frail little skiff to a small projecting point further on, to which, as soon as her senses came back to her, Rosalind rushed, with what intention she scarcely knew, to plunge into the water though she could not swim, to do something, if it should only be to drown along with them. The danger that the boat might float out into the lake was not all; for any frightened movement, even an attempt to help themselves on the part of the children, might upset the frail craft in a moment, and end their voyage for ever.

She flew over the broken ground, stumbling in her hurry and agitation, doing her best to stifle the cries that burst from her, lest she should frighten the little voyagers. For the moment they were quite still, surprise and alarm and a temporary confusion as to what to do having quieted their usual restlessness. Amy's little face, with a smile on it, gradually growing fixed as fear crept over her which she would not betray, and Johnny's back as he settled himself on the rowing seat, with his arms just beginning to move towards the oars which Rosalind felt would be instant destruction did he get hold of them, stood out in her eyes as if against a background of flame. It was only the background of the water, all soft and glowing, with scarcely a ripple upon it, safe, so peaceful, and yet death. There could not have been a prettier picture. The boat was reflected in every tint, the children's dresses, its own lines of white and crimson, the foolish little flag of the same colours that fluttered at the bow—all

prettiness, gaiety, a picture that would have delighted a child, softly floating, double, boat and shadow. But never was any scene of prettiness looked at with such despair. 'Keep still, keep still,' Rosalind cried, half afraid even to say so much, as she flew along, her brain all one throb. If but the gentle breeze, the current so slight as to be scarcely visible, would drift them to the point! if only her feet would carry her there in time! Her sight seemed to fail her, and yet for years after it was like a picture ineffaceable printed upon her eyes.

She was rushing into the water in despair, with her hands stretched out, but, alas! seeing too clearly that the boat was still out of her reach, and restraining with pain the cry of anguish which would have startled the children, when she felt herself suddenly put aside and a coat, thrown off by some one in rapid motion, fell at her feet. Rosalind did not lose her senses, which were all strung to the last degree of vivid force and capability; but she knew nothing, did not think, was conscious neither of her own existence nor of how this came about, of nothing but the sight before her eyes. She stood among the reeds, her feet in the water, trying to smile to the children, to Amy upon whom terror was growing, and to keep her own cries from utterance. The plunge of the new-comer in the water startled Johnny. He had got hold of the oar, and in the act of flinging it upon the water with the clap which used to delight him on the lake at home, turned sharply round to see what this new sound meant. Then the light vanished from Rosalind's eyes. She uttered one cry, which seemed to ring from one end of the lake to the other, and startled the rowers far away on the other side. Then gradually sight came back to her. Had it all turned into death and destruction, that shining water with its soft reflections, the pretty outline, the floating colours? She heard a sound of voices, the tones of the children, and then the scene became visible again, as if a black shadow had been removed. There was the boat, still floating double, Amy's face full of smiles, Johnny's voice raised high. 'Oh, I could have doned it!'—a man's head above the level of the water, a hand upon the side of the boat. Then some one called to her, 'No harm done; I will take them back to the beach.' The throbbing went out of Rosalind's brain and went lower down, till her limbs shook under her, and how to get through the reeds she could not tell. She lifted the coat instinctively and struggled along, taking, it seemed to her, half an hour to retrace the steps which she had made in two minutes



in the access of terror which had left her so weak. The nurse, who had fallen helpless on the beach, covering her eyes with her hands not to see the catastrophe, had recovered and got the children in her arms before Rosalind reached them. They were quite at their ease and skipped about on the shingle when lifted from the boat with an air of triumph. 'I could have doned it if you had left me alone,' said Johnny, careless of the mingled caresses and reproaches that fell upon him in a torrent—the 'Oh, children, you've almost killed me!' of nurse, and the passionate clasp with which Rosalind seized upon them. 'We were floating beautiful,' said little Amy, oblivious of her terrors—and they began to descant both together upon the delights of their 'sail.' 'Oh, it is far nicer than those big boats!' 'And if he had let me get the oars out I'd have doned it myself,' cried Johnny. The group of children which had been disturbed by the accident stood round gaping open-mouthed in admiration, and the loud sound of hurrying oars from a boat rushing across the lake to the rescue added to the excitement of the little hero and heroine. Rosalind's dress was torn with her rush through the reeds, her shoes wet, her whole frame trembling; while nurse had got her tidy bonnet awry and her hair out of order. But the small adventurers had suffered no harm or strain of any kind. They were jaunty in their perfect success and triumph.

'I thought it safest to bring them round to this bit of beach, where they could be landed without any difficulty. Oh, pray don't say anything about it. It was little more than wading, the water is not deep. And I am amply—— Miss Trevanion! I am shocked to see you carrying my coat!'

Rosalind turned to the dripping figure by her side with a cry of astonishment. She had been far too much agitated even to make any question in her mind who it was. Now she raised her eyes to meet—what? the eyes that were like Johnny's, the dark, wistful, appealing look which had come back to her mind so often. He stood there with the water running from him, in the glow of exertion, his face thinner and less boyish, but his look the same as when he had come to her help on the country road, and by the little lake at Highcourt. It flashed through Rosalind's mind that he had always come to her help. She uttered the 'Oh!' which is English for every sudden wonder, not knowing what to say.

'I hope,' he said, 'that you may perhaps remember I once saw you at Highcourt in the old days, in a little difficulty with a boat. This was scarcely more than that.'

'I recollect,' she said, her breath coming fast; 'you were very kind—and now—— Oh, this is a great deal more, I owe you—their lives.'

'Pray don't say so. It was nothing—anyone would have done it, even if there had been a great deal more to do, but there was nothing; it was little more than wading.' Then he took his coat from her hand, which she had been holding all the time. 'It is far more—it is too much that you should have carried my coat, Miss Trevanion. It is more than a reward.'

She had thought of the face so often, the eyes fixed upon her, and had forgotten what doubts had visited her mind when she saw him before. Now, when she met the gaze of those eyes again, all her doubts came back. There was a faint internal struggle, even while she remembered that he had saved the lives of the children. 'I know,' she said, recollecting herself, 'that we have met before, and that I had other things to thank you for, though nothing like this. But you must forgive me, for I don't know your name.'

'My name is Everard,' he said, with a little hesitation and a quick flush of colour. His face, which had always been refined in feature, had a delicacy that looked like ill-health, and as he pulled on his coat over his wet clothes he shivered slightly. Was it because he felt the chill, or only to call forth the sudden anxiety which appeared in Rosalind's face? 'Oh,' he said, 'it was momentary. I shall take no harm.'

'What can we do?' cried Rosalind with alarm. 'If it should make you ill! And you are here perhaps for the baths? and yet have plunged in without thought. What can we do? There is no carriage nor anything to be got. Oh, Mr. Everard! take pity upon me, and hasten home.'

'I will walk with you if you will let me.'

'But we cannot go quick, the children are not able, and what if you catch cold! My aunt would never forgive me if I let you wait.'

'There could be nothing improper,' he said hastily, 'with the nurse and the children.'

Rosalind felt the pain of this mistaken speech prick her like a pin-point. To think in your innermost consciousness that a man is 'not a gentleman' is worse than anything else that can be said of him in English speech. She hesitated and was angry with herself, but yet her colour rose high. 'What I mean,' she said with an indescribable delicate pride, 'is that you will take cold—you understand me surely—you will take cold after being in the water.'

I beg you to go on without waiting, for the children cannot walk quickly.'

'And you?' he said—still he did not seem to understand, but looked at her with a sort of delighted persuasion that she was avoiding the walk with him coyly, with that feminine withdrawal which leads a suitor on. 'You are just as wet as I am. Could not we two push on and leave the children to follow?'

Rosalind gave him a look which was full of almost despairing wonder. The mind and the words conveyed so different an impression from that made by the refined features and harmonious face. 'Oh, please go away,' she said, 'I am in misery to see you standing there so wet. My aunt will send to you to thank you. Oh, please go away! If you catch cold we will never forgive ourselves,' Rosalind cried, with an earnestness that brought tears to her eyes.

'Miss Trevanion, that you should care——'

Rosalind, in her heat and eagerness, made an imperious gesture, stamping her foot on the sand in passionate impatience. 'Go, go!' she cried. 'We owe you the children's lives, and we shall not forget it—but go!'

He hesitated. He did not believe nor understand her! He looked in her eyes wistfully, yet with a sort of smile, to know how much of it was true. Could anyone who was a gentleman have so failed to apprehend her meaning? Yet it did gleam on him at length, and he obeyed her though reluctantly, turning back half-a-dozen times in the first hundred yards to see if she were coming. At last a turn in the road hid him from her troubled eyes.

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## CHAPTER XLII.

WHEN the party arrived at the hotel and Aunt Sophy was informed of what had happened, her excitement was great. The children were caressed and scolded in a breath. After a while, however, the enormity of their behaviour was dwelt upon by all their guardians together.

'I was saying, ma'am, that I couldn't never take Miss Amy and Master Johnny near to that lake again. Oh, I couldn't!—the hotel garden, I couldn't go farther, not with any peace of mind.'

'You hear what nurse says, children!' said Aunt Sophy; 'she is quite right. It would be impossible for me to allow you to go out again unless you made me a promise, oh, a faithful promise.'

Amy was tired with the long walk after all the excitement; and she was always an impressionable little thing. She began to cry and protest that she never meant any harm, that the boat was so pretty, and that she was sure it was fastened and could not get away. But Johnny held his ground. 'I could have doned it myself,' he said; 'I know how to row. Nobody wasn't wanted—if that fellow had let us alone.'

'Where is the gentleman, Rosalind?' cried Mrs. Lennox. 'Oh, how could you be so ungrateful as to let him go without asking where he was to be found? To think he should have saved these precious children and not to know where to find him to thank him! Oh, children, only think, if you had been brought home all cold and stiff, and laid out there never to give any more trouble, never to go home again, never to speak to your poor distracted auntie, or to poor Rosalind, or to—— Oh, my darlings! What should I have done if you had been brought home to me like that? It would have killed me. I should never more have held up my head again.'

At this terrible prospect, and at the sight of Aunt Sophy's tears, Amy flung her arms as far as they would go round that portly figure and hid her sobs upon her aunt's bosom. Johnny began to yield; he grew pale, and his big eyes veiled themselves with a film of tears. To think of lying there cold and stiff, as Aunt Sophy said, daunted the little hero. 'I could have doned it,' he said, but faltered, and his mouth began to quiver.

'And Uncle John,' cried Mrs. Lennox, 'and Rex! what would you have said never, never to see them again?'

Johnny in his own mind piled up the agony still higher—and the rabbits, and the pigeons, and his own pet guinea-pig, and his pony! He flung himself into Aunt Sophy's lap, which was so large, and so soft, and so secure.

This scene moved Rosalind both to tears and laughter; for it was a little pathetic as well as funny, and the girl was over-strained. She would have liked to fling herself, too, into arms of love like Aunt Sophy's, which were full—arms as loving but more strong. The children did not want their mother, but Rosalind did. Her mind was moved by sentiments more complex than Johnny's emotions, but she had no one to have recourse to. The afternoon brightness had faded, and the grey of twilight filled the large room, making everything indistinct. At this crisis the door opened and somebody was ushered into the room, someone who came forward with a hesitating yet eager step. 'I hope I may

be permitted, though I am without introduction, to ask if the children have taken any harm,' he said.

'It is Mr. Everard, Aunt Sophy.' Rosalind retired to the background, her heart beating loudly. She wanted to look on to see what appearance he presented to a spectator, to know how he would speak, what he would say.

'Oh !' cried Mrs. Lennox, standing up with a child in each arm, 'it is the gentleman who saved my darlings—it is your deliverer, children. Oh, sir, what can I say to you ; how can I even thank you ? You have saved my life too, for I should never have survived if anything had happened to them.'

He stood against the light of one of the windows, unconscious of the eager criticism with which he was being watched. Perhaps the bow he made was a little elaborate, but his voice was soft and refined. 'I am very glad if I have been of any service,' he said.

'Oh, service ! it is far, far beyond that. I hope Rosalind said something to you ; I hope she told you how precious they were, and that we could never, never forget.'

'There is nothing to thank me for indeed. It was more a joke than anything else ; the little things were in no danger so long as they sat still. I was scarcely out of my depth, not much more than wading all the time.'

'Aunt Sophy, that is what I told you,' said Johnny, withdrawing his head from under her arm. 'I could have doned it myself.'

'Oh hush, Johnny ! Whatever way it was done, what does that matter ?—here they are, and they might have been at the bottom of the lake. And you risked your own life or your health, which comes to the same thing ? Pray sit down, Mr. Everard. If you are here,' Aunt Sophy went on, loosing her arms from the children and sitting down with the full purpose of enjoying a talk, 'as I am, for the waters, to get drenched and to walk home in your wet clothes must have been madness—that is, if you are here for your health.'

'I am here for the baths, but a trifle like that could harm no one.'

'Oh, I trust not—oh, I anxiously trust not ! It makes my heart stand still even to think of it. Are you getting any benefit ? It is for rheumatism, I suppose ? And what form does yours take ? One sufferer is interested in another,' Mrs. Lennox said.

He seemed to wince a little, and threw a glance behind into

the dimness to look for Rosalind. To confess to rheumatism is not interesting. He said at last with a faint laugh: 'I had rheumatic fever some years ago. My heart is supposed to be affected, that is all; the water couldn't hurt that organ; indeed I think it did good.'

Rosalind in the background knew that this was meant for her; but her criticism was disarmed by a touch of humorous sympathy for the poor young fellow, who had expected no doubt to appear in the character of a hero, and was thus received as a fellow-sufferer in rheumatism. But Mrs. Lennox naturally saw nothing ludicrous in the situation. 'Mine,' she said, 'is in the joints. I get so stiff, and really to rise up after I have been sitting down for any time is quite an operation. I suppose you don't feel anything of that sort? To be sure, you are so much younger—but sufferers have a fellow-feeling. And when did you begin your baths? and how many do you mean to take? and do you think they are doing you any good? It is more than I can say just at present, but they tell me that it often happens so, and that it is afterwards that one feels the good result.'

'I know scarcely any one here,' said the young man, 'so I have not been able to compare notes; but I am not ill, only taking the baths to please a—relation, who, perhaps,' he said with a little laugh, 'takes more interest in me than I deserve.'

'Oh, I am sure not that!' said Aunt Sophy with enthusiasm. 'But indeed it is very nice of you to pay so much attention to your relation's wishes. You will never repent putting yourself to trouble for her peace of mind, and I am sure I sympathise with her very much in the anxiety she must be feeling. When the heart is affected it is always serious. I hope, Mr. —'

'Everard,' he said with a bow, once more just a little, as the critic behind him felt, too elaborate for the occasion.

'I beg your pardon. Rosalind did tell me; but I was so much agitated, almost too much to pay any attention. I hope, Mr. Everard, that you are careful to keep yourself from all agitation. I can't think the shock of plunging into the lake could be good for you. Oh, I feel quite sure it couldn't be good. I hope you will feel no ill results afterwards. But excitement of any sort, or agitation, that is the worst thing for the heart. I hope, for your poor dear relation's sake, who must be so anxious, poor lady, that you will take every care.'

He gave a glance behind Mrs. Lennox to the shadow which stood between him and the window. 'That depends,' he said,



'rather on other people than on myself. You may be sure I should prefer to be happy and at ease if it were in my power.'

'Ah, well!' said Aunt Sophy, 'that is very true. Of course our happiness depends very much upon other people. And you have done a great deal for mine, Mr. Everard. It would not have done me much good to have people telling me to be cheerful if my poor little darlings had been at the bottom of the lake.' Here Aunt Sophy stopped and cried a little, then went on. 'You are not, I think, living at our hotel, but I hope you will stay and dine with us. Oh yes, I cannot take any refusal. We may have made your acquaintance informally, but few people can have so good a reason for wishing to know you. This is my niece, Miss Trevanion, Mr. Everard; the little children you saved are my brother's children—the late Mr. Trevanion of Highcourt.'

Rosalind listened with her heart beating high. Was it possible that he would receive the introduction as if he had known nothing of her before? He rose and turned towards her, made once more that slightly stiff, too elaborate bow, and was silent. No, worse than that, began to say something about being happy to make—acquaintance.

'Aunt Sophy,' said Rosalind, stepping forward, 'you are under a mistake. Mr. Everard knows us well enough. I met him before we left Highcourt.' And then she too paused, feeling with sudden embarrassment that there was a certain difficulty in explaining their meetings, a difficulty of which she had not thought. It was he now who had the advantage which she had felt to lie with herself.

'It is curious how things repeat themselves,' he said. 'I had once the pleasure of recovering a boat that had floated away from Miss Trevanion on the pond at Highcourt, but I could not have ventured to claim acquaintance on so small an argument as that.'

Rosalind was silenced—her mind began to grow confused. It was not true that this was all, and yet it was not false. She said nothing; if it was wrong she made herself an accomplice in the wrong; and Aunt Sophy's exclamations soon put an end to the incident.

'So you had met before!' she cried. 'So you know Highcourt! Oh, what a very small world this is!—everybody says so, but it is only now and then that one is sensible. But you must tell us all about it at dinner. We dine at the *table d'hôte*, if you don't mind. It is more amusing, and I don't like to shut up

Rosalind with only an old lady like me for her company. You like it too? Oh, well, that is quite nice. Will you excuse us now, Mr. Everard, while we prepare for dinner? for that is the dressing-bell just ringing, and they allow one so little time. Give me your hand, dear, to help me up. You see I am quite crippled,' Mrs. Lennox said complacently, forgetting how nimbly she had sprung from her chair with a child under each arm to greet their deliverer. She limped a little as she went out of the room on Rosalind's arm. She was quite sure that her rheumatism made her limp; but sometimes she forgot that she had rheumatism, which is a thing that will happen in such cases now and then.

The room was still dark. It was not Mrs. Lennox's custom to have it lighted before dinner, and when the door closed upon the ladies the young man was left alone. His thoughts were full of triumph and satisfaction not unmingled with praise. He had attained by the chance of a moment what he had set his heart upon, he said to himself; for years he had haunted Highcourt for this end; he had been kept cruelly and unnaturally (he thought) from realising it. Those who might have helped him, without any harm to themselves, had refused and resisted his desire, and compelled him to relinquish it. And now in a moment he had attained what he had so desired. Introduced under the most flattering circumstances, with every prepossession in his favour, having had it in his power to lay under the deepest obligation the family, the guardians as well as the girl who, he said to himself, was the only girl he had ever loved. Did he love Rosalind? He thought so, as Mrs. Lennox thought she had rheumatism. Both were serious enough—and perhaps this young stranger was not clearly aware how much it was he saw in Rosalind besides herself. He saw in her a great deal that did not meet the outward eye, though he also saw the share of beauty she possessed, magnified by his small acquaintance with women of her kind. He saw her sweet, and fair, and desirable in every way, as the truest lover might have done. And there were other advantages which such a lover as Roland Hamerton would have scorned to take into consideration, which Rivers—not able at his more serious age to put them entirely out of his mind—yet turned from instinctively as if it were doing her a wrong to remember them, but which this young man realised vividly and reminded himself of with rising exhilaration. With such a wife what might he not do? Blot out everything that was against him, attain everything

he had ever dreamt of, secure happiness, advancement, wealth. He moved from window to window of the dim room, waiting for the ladies, in a state of exaltation indescribable. He had been raised at once from earth to heaven. There was not a circumstance that was not in his favour. He was received by them as an intimate, he was to be their escort, to be introduced by them, to form one of their party; and Rosalind, Rosalind! she was the only girl whom he had ever loved.

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

HE was placed between the ladies at the *table d'hôte*. Mrs. Lennox on her side told the story of what had happened to the lady on her other side, and Rosalind was appealed to by her left-hand neighbour to know what was the truth of the rumour which had begun to float about the little community. It was reported all down the table, so far, at least, as the English group extended, 'That is the gentleman next to Mrs. Lennox—the children were drowning, and he plunged in and saved both.' 'What carelessness to let them go so near the water! It is easy to see, poor things, that they have no mother.' 'And did he save them both? Of course, they must both be safe or Mrs. Lennox and Miss Trevanion would not have appeared at the *table d'hôte*.' Such remarks as these, interspersed with questions, 'Who is the young fellow?—where has he sprung from?—I never saw him before,' buzzed all about as dinner went on. Mr. Everard was presented by Mrs. Lennox in her gratitude to the lady next to her, who was rather a great lady and put up her glass to look at him. He was introduced to the gentleman on Rosalind's other hand by that gentleman's request. Thus he made his appearance in society at Aix with the greatest *éclat*. When they rose from the table he followed Rosalind out of doors into the soft autumnal night. The little verandah and the garden walks under the trees were full of people, under cover of whose noisy conversation there was abundant opportunity for a more interesting *tête-à-tête*. 'You are too kind,' he said, 'in telling this little story. Indeed there was nothing to make any commotion about. You could almost have done it, without any help from me.'

'No,' she said. 'I could not have done it; I should have tried and perhaps been drowned too. But it is not I who have talked, it is Aunt Sophy. She is very grateful to you.'

'She has no occasion,' he said. 'Whatever I could do for you, Miss Trevanion——' and then he stopped, somewhat breathlessly. 'It was curious, was it not? that the boat on the pond should have been so much the same thing, though everything else was so different. And that is years ago.'

'Nearly two years.'

'Then you remember?' he said in a tone of delighted surprise.

'I have much occasion to remember. It was at a very sad moment. I remember everything that happened.'

'To be sure,' said the young man. 'No, I did not forget. It was only that, in the pleasure of seeing you everything else went out of my mind. But I have never forgotten, Miss Trevanion, all your anxiety. I saw you, you may remember, the day you were leaving home.'

Rosalind raised her eyes to him with a look of pain. 'It is not a happy recollection,' she said.

'Oh, Miss Rosalind. I hope you will forgive me for recalling to you what is so painful.'

'The sight of you recalls it,' she said; 'it is not your fault. Mr. Everard, you had relations near Highcourt.'

'Only one, but nobody now—nobody. It was a sort of chance that took me there at all. I was in a little trouble, and then I left suddenly, as it happened, the same day as you did, Miss Trevanion. How well I remember it all! You were carrying the same little boy who was in the boat to-day—was it the same?—and you would not let me help you. I almost think if you had seen it was me you would not have allowed me to help you to-day.'

'If I had seen it was——' Rosalind paused with troubled surprise. Sometimes his fine voice and soft tones lulled her doubts altogether, but, again, a sudden touch brought them all back. He was very quick, however, to observe the changes in her, and changed with them with a curious mixture of sympathy and servility.

'Circumstances have carried me far away since then,' he said; 'but I have always longed to know, to hear something. If I could tell you the questions I have asked myself as to what might be going on; and how many times I have tried to get to England to find out!'

'We have never returned to Highcourt,' she said, confused by his efforts to bring back those former meetings, and not knowing how to reply. 'I think we shall not till my brother comes

of age. Yes, my little brother was the same. He is very much excited about what happened to-day; neither of them understood it at first, but now they begin to perceive that it is a wonderful adventure. I hope the wetting will do you no harm.'

'Please,' he said in a petulant tone, 'if you do not want to vex me, say no more of that. I am not such a weak creature; indeed, there is nothing the matter with me, except in imagination.'

'I think,' said Rosalind, with a little involuntary laugh, 'that the baths of Aix are good for the imagination. It grows by what it feeds on; though rheumatism does not seem to be an imaginative sort of malady.'

'You forget,' he cried, almost with resentment; 'the danger of it is that it affects the heart, which is not a thing to laugh at.'

'Oh, forgive me!' Rosalind cried. 'I should not have spoken so lightly. It was because you were so determined that nothing ailed you. And I hope you are right. The lake was so beautiful to-day. It did not look as if it could do harm.'

'You go there often? I saw you had been painting.'

'Making a very little, very bad sketch, that was all. Mr. Everard, I think I must go in. My aunt will want me.'

'May I come too? How kind she is! I feared that being without introduction, knowing nobody—— But Mrs. Lennox has been most generous, receiving me without a question—and you, Miss Trevanion?'

'Did you expect me to stop you from saving the children till I had asked who you were?' cried Rosalind, endeavouring to elude the seriousness with which he always returned to the original subject. 'It is a pretty manner of introduction to do us the greatest service, the greatest kindness.'

'But it was nothing. I can assure you it was nothing,' he said. He liked to be able to make this protestation. It was a sort of renewing of his claim upon them. To have a right, the very strongest right to their gratitude, and yet to declare it was nothing—that was very pleasant to the young man. And in a way it was true. He would have done anything that it did not hurt him very much to do for Rosalind, even for her aunt and her little brothers and sisters, but to feel that he was entitled to their thanks and yet waived them was delightful to him. It was a statement over and over again of his right to be with them. He accompanied Rosalind to the room in which Aunt Sophy had established herself with mingled confidence and timidity, ingratiating himself by every means that were possible, though he did not talk very much.

Indeed, he was not great in conversation at any time, and now he was so anxious to please that he was nervous and doubtful what to say.

Mrs. Lennox received the young people with real pleasure. She liked, as has been said in a previous part of this history, to have a young man about, in general attendance, ready to go upon her errands and make himself agreeable. It added to the ease and the gaiety of life to have a lover upon hand, one who was not too far gone, who still had eyes for the other members of the party, and a serious intention of making himself generally pleasant. She had never concealed her opinion that an attendant of this description was an advantage. And Mrs. Lennox was imprudent to the bottom of her heart. She had plenty of wise maxims in store as to the necessity of keeping ineligible persons at a distance, but it did not occur to her to imagine that a well-looking young stranger attaching himself to her own party might be ineligible. Of Arthur Rivers she had known that his family lived in an obscure street in Clifton, which furnished her with objections at once. But of Mr. Everard, who had saved the children's lives, she had no doubts. She did indeed mean to ask him if he belonged to the Everards of Essex, but in the meantime was quite willing to take that for granted.

'It is so curious,' she said, making room for him to bring a chair beside her, 'that you and Rosalind should have met before, and how fortunate for us! Oh yes, Highcourt is a fine place. Of course we think so, Rosalind and I, having both been born there. We think there is no place in the world like it; but I have a right to feel myself impartial, for I have been a good deal about; and there is no doubt it is a fine place. Did you see over the house, Mr. Everard? Oh no, of course it was when my poor brother was ill. There were so many trying circumstances,' she added, lowering her voice, 'that we thought it best just to leave it, you know, and the Elms does very well for the children as long as they are children. Of course, when Reginald comes of age—— Do you know the neighbourhood of Clifton, Mr. Everard? Oh, you must come and see me there. It is a capital hunting country, you know, and that is always an inducement to a gentleman.'

'I should have no need of any inducement, if you are so kind.'

'It is you that have been kind,' Mrs. Lennox said. 'I am sure if we can do anything to make our house agreeable to you—— Now tell me how you get on here. How often do you take the baths? Oh, I hope you are regular—so much depends upon regularity, they tell me. Lady Blashfield, whom I was talking to at dinner, tells



me that if you miss one it is as bad as giving up altogether. It is the continuity, she says. Young men are very difficult to guide in respect to their health. My dear husband, that is, Mr. Pulteney, my *first* dear husband, whom I lost when we were both quite young, might have been here now, poor dear fellow, if he had only consented to be an invalid, and to use the remedies. You must let one who has suffered so much say a word of warning to you, Mr. Everard. Use the remedies, and youth will do almost everything for you. He might have been here now——’ Mrs. Lennox paused and applied her handkerchief to her eyes.

Young Everard listened with the most devout attention, while Rosalind, on her side, could not refrain from an involuntary reflection as to the extreme inconvenience of Mr. Pulteney’s presence now. If that had been all along possible, was not Aunt Sophy guilty of a kind of constructive bigamy? To hear her dwelling upon this subject, and the stranger listening with so much attention, gave Rosalind an insane desire to laugh. Even Roland Hamerton, she thought, would have seen the humour of the suggestion; but Everard was quite serious, lending an anxious ear. He was very anxious to please. There was an absence of ease about him in his anxiety. Not the ghost of a smile stole to his lips. He sat there until Mrs. Lennox got tired, and remembered that the early hour at which she began to bathe every morning made it expedient now to go to bed. He was on the alert in a moment, offering his arm, and truly sympathetic about the difficulty she expressed in rising from her chair. ‘I can get on when once I am fairly started,’ she said; ‘thank you so much, Mr. Everard. Rosalind is very kind, but naturally in a gentleman’s arm there is more support.’

‘I am so glad that I can be of use,’ he said fervently. And Rosalind followed up-stairs, carrying Aunt Sophy’s work, half pleased, half amused, a little disconcerted by the sudden friendship which had arisen between them. She was, herself, in a very uncertain, somewhat excited state of mind. The re-appearance of the stranger who had achieved for himself, she could not tell how, a place in her dreams, disturbed the calm in which she had been living, which in itself was a calm unnatural at her age. Her heart beat with curious content, expectation, doubt, and anxiety. He was not like the other men whom she had known. There was something uncertain about him, a curiosity as to what he would do or say, a suppressed alarm in her mind as to whether his doings and sayings would be satisfactory. He might make some terrible mistake. He might say something that would set

in a moment a great gulf between him and her. It was uncomfortable, and yet perhaps it had a certain fascination in it. She never knew what was the next thing he might say or do. But Aunt Sophy was loud in his praises when they reached their own apartment. 'What a thoroughly nice person!' she said. 'What a modest, charming young man! not like so many laughing in their sleeve, in a hurry to get away, taking no trouble about elder people. Mr. Everard has been thoroughly well brought up, Rosalind; he must have had a nice mother. That is always what I think when I see a young man with such good manners. His mother must have been a nice woman. I am sure if he had been my own nephew he could not have been more attentive to me.'

Rosalind said little in reply to this praise. She was pleased, and yet an intrusive doubt would come in. To be a little original, not like all the others, is not that an advantage? and yet—— She went to her own room, thoughtful yet with a sensation of novelty not without pleasure in her mind, and paused in passing at the children's door to pay them her usual visit and give them the kiss when they were asleep which their mother was not near to give. This visit had a twofold meaning to Rosalind. It was a visit of love to the little ones, that they might not be deprived of any tenderness that she could give; and it was a sort of pilgrimage of faithful devotion to the shrine which the mother had left empty. A pang of longing for that mother, and of the wondering pain which her name always called forth, was in her heart when she stooped over the little beds. Ordinarily, everything was dim—the faint night-light affording guidance to where they lay, and no more—and still, with nothing but the soft breathing of the two children, one in the outer and the other in the inner room. But to-night there was a candle burning within and the sound of nurse's voice soothing Johnny, who, sitting up in his bed, was looking round him with eyes full of light, and that large childish wakefulness which seems a sort of protest against ever sleeping again.

'Oh, Miss Rosalind, I don't know what to do with Master Johnny; he says a lady came and looked at him. You've not been here, have you, Miss? I tell him there is no lady. He must just have dreamed it.'

'I didn't dreamed it,' said Johnny. 'It was a beautiful lady. She came in *there*, and stood *here*. I want her to come again,' the child said, gazing about him with his great eyes.

'But it is impossible, Miss Rosalind,' said the nurse; 'the door

is locked, and there is no lady. He just must have been dreaming. He is a little upset with the accident.'

'We wasn't a bit upsetted,' said Johnny. 'I could have doned it myself. I wanted to tell the lady, Rosy—but she only said, "Go to sleep."'

'That was the very wisest thing she could say. Go to sleep, and I will sit by you,' said Rosalind.

It was some time, however, before Johnny accomplished the feat of going to sleep. He was very talkative and anxious to fight his battles over again, and explain exactly how he would have 'doned' it. When the little eyes closed at last, and all was still Rosalind found the nurse waiting in the outer room in some anxiety.

'Yes, Miss Rosalind, I am sure he was off his head a little—not to call wandering, but just a little off his head. For how could any lady have got into this room? It is just his imagination. I had once a little boy before who was just the same, always seeing ladies and people whenever he was the least excited. I will give him a dose in the morning, and if he sees her again I would just send for the doctor. It is all physical, Miss, them sort of visions,' said the nurse, who was up to the science of her time.

(To be continued.)

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### *The 'Donna.'*

THE EDITOR begs to acknowledge the receipt of 5s. from S. C., Melrose House, Brockhurst.

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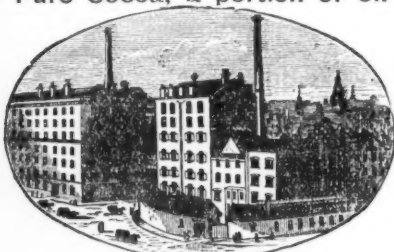
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